

# How the Populist Radical Right Transformed Swiss Welfare Politics: From Compromises to Polarization

ALEXANDRE AFONSO<sup>1</sup> AND YANNIS PAPADOPOULOS<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Leiden University

<sup>2</sup>University of Lausanne

**Abstract:** *This paper shows how the rise of the Swiss People's Party (SVP) has affected welfare state reforms in Switzerland between the 1990s and the 2000s. In the 1990s, welfare state reforms drew on "modernizing" coalitions between FDP (Liberals), CVP (Christian Democrats) and SP (Social Democrats) combining retrenchment and "recalibration". In the 2000s the FDP and CVP increasingly sided with the SVP in right-wing coalitions pushing retrenchment alone. The article shows that changes in party competition have affected welfare schemes differently, with a policy gridlock in pension reforms, where voters of the SVP do not follow their elites, but unilateral retrenchment in unemployment insurance, where recipients can be portrayed as "underserving".*

**KEYWORDS:** welfare state reform, Switzerland, party politics, coalitions, right-wing populism, Swiss People's Party

## Introduction

How does the rise of populist radical right parties affect welfare state reforms? While the transformation of West European party systems under the influence of populist radical parties has been the focus of a large body of research (Kriesi et al. 2008; Mudde 2007), its consequences for public policymaking, and welfare state policies in particular, remain ambiguous (Häusermann et al. 2013: 226-229). In this article, we link recent literature on the rise of populist radical right parties and research on welfare state reforms to assess how politics shape policies. A central focus of the article is the impact of the rise of the populist radical right on coalition-building in welfare reforms, drawing on a detailed case study analysis of the Swiss case.

Switzerland is an interesting example to analyse this connection because it yields ambivalent expectations about the impact of party system change on welfare reforms. On the one hand, as other articles in this special issue make clear, the Swiss party system has faced important challenges in its capacity to build political compromises in recent decades. Bornschieer (2015) shows that polarization has increased, including on the socio-economic dimension related to welfare policies. Traber (2015) also shows that conflict has increased in Parliament, and grand coalitions including all Swiss governmental parties have become less frequent. The decisive factor in these transformations has been the rise of Swiss People's Party as a strong political force mobilising voters around the "TAN" (traditional/authoritarian/nationalist) pole of political competition (see Hooghe et al. 2002: 966). If we emphasise *agency* and believe that party politics matters for policymaking, we should expect a substantial degree of policy change because political power relationships have been substantially transformed.

If we focus on *institutions*, however, the very high consensus requirements imposed by Swiss political institutions weigh heavily on policy change, especially in the domain of social protection. Until recently, much of the literature in this domain emphasised policy stability as the main characteristic of welfare reforms (Van Kersbergen & Vis 2013: 14). Drawing on this, Switzerland should be a case where change without compromise should be unlikely (Bonoli 1999).

In this article, we argue that the rise and consolidation of the radical right in Switzerland has changed political coalitions in welfare reforms from the late 1990s onwards, and that the new patterns of coalition-building have differed across policy areas. First, we show how the rise of the SVP has made the “modernization compromises” that prevailed in the 1990s more difficult, because the “modernization” component of these reforms found little political support among right-wing parties with a shrinking centrist segment and an expanded conservative segment. As a matter of fact, the SVP and its voters are clearly opposed to the “social investment” component that allowed left-right alliances (Fossati & Hausermann 2014: 598). While reforms of the 1990s united segments of the Social Democrats and Greens and progressive segments of the FDP and CVP, reforms in the 2000s have more often relied on alliances between FDP, CVP and the Swiss People’s Party *against* the Social Democrats and Greens.

Second, we show that the impact of changing power relationships has been differentiated across welfare schemes, depending on the degree of perceived “deservingness” of recipients of the scheme. In unemployment policy, fiscal retrenchment coincided with the SVP’s conception of low “deservingness of recipients”. In this area, changes took the form of “adversarial retrenchment” pitting the right and populist right against the left. In the domain of pensions, however, deadlock ensued because fiscal retrenchment clashed with the image of deservingness of recipients, and the electorate of the Swiss People’s Party failed to follow its elites. In this domain, a clear gap between elite and voters within the party could be observed, resulting into a clear disjuncture between the parliamentary and the referendum arena.

While some studies explain the impact of the welfare state on support for the populist radical right (Swank & Betz 2003), few scholars have sought to assess the impact of the radical right on welfare reforms. Recently, Schumacher and Van Kersbergen (2014) have analysed the influence of populist right-wing parties (PRWPs) on the welfare positions of mainstream parties. Drawing on the Dutch, Austrian and Swiss cases, Afonso (2015) analyses the trade-offs between office and votes that these parties face in the domain of pension politics when they take part in government coalitions. This article builds on this latter perspective but expands it in two ways. First, while Afonso only analyses pension politics, we compare pensions with unemployment protection to assess the differential impact of PRWPs across social policy areas. Second, while Afonso focuses on the internal dilemmas of PRWPs, we assess their broader “external” impact on coalition patterns within a policy area, showing the changing coalition behaviour of other parties as well. We analyse the major reforms in pensions and unemployment in the Swiss parliament that took place between the mid-1990s and the late 2000s, a period during which the SVP doubled its parliamentary representation. Thus, this article uses a case study approach to track down the relationship between the SVP and the coalition patterns observed in welfare reforms. The article aims to contribute to a better understanding of the channels whereby changing patterns of party competition hinder or facilitate welfare state change.

## Populist Right-Wing Parties and Welfare State Reforms

Within welfare state research, Walter Korpi's (1983) model of "democratic class struggle" has constituted an extremely influential frame of analysis, arguing that party conflicts about welfare and redistribution essentially mirror power relationships in the economic sphere. Within this model, trade unions and social democratic parties represent low-income groups and push for the expansion of welfare protection, sometimes with the support of Christian-Democrats (Van Kersbergen 1995). In contrast, right-wing parties and employers seek to counter it on behalf of higher-income groups. However, this model has become partly inadequate as it no longer corresponds to current electoral alignments. In many countries, populist radical right parties have become strong competitors for working class votes, while social-democratic parties have moved their focus on the "new" middle classes in the public sector, healthcare and education (Arzheimer 2012; Oesch 2008).

Following Mudde (2007) we define populist right-wing parties as parties combining nativism, authoritarianism and populism at the core of their ideology. One of the most prominent features of PRWPs in terms of voter alignments is their strong working-class rooting. Besides their traditional popularity among the "*petite bourgeoisie*" (small business owners and artisans), their success in recent years has hinged to a considerable extent on their appeal among production and service workers, as documented for a number of European countries where PRWPs have become the party of choice for native low-income voters (Arzheimer 2012; Ford & Goodwin 2014; Oesch 2008; Rydgren 2012). This statement is definitely appropriate for Switzerland in terms of class, income and education (Oesch and Rennwald 2010). According to *Selects* survey data for the 2011 federal elections, 34.8% of service workers and 36.9% of production workers voted for the SVP, while only 16.2% and 15.8% respectively voted for the Social Democrats. In line with this, the SVP electorate had both the highest share of voters without upper secondary education (13.6% vs. 8.6% total), and the lowest share with tertiary education (24.8% vs. 36.8% for the whole electorate). Among voters without upper secondary education, the SVP reached 42% vs. 14% for the Social Democrats who, similarly to other countries, have progressively reoriented their agenda towards the "new middle classes" (teachers, academics, public sector workers, health professionals, etc.) (Kitschelt 1994).

However, while social democratic parties could typically be expected to support welfare expansion, the socio-economic agenda of PRWPs is much less clear (Mudde 2007; Rovny 2013). Kitschelt and McGann (Kitschelt & McGann 1995) presented a free-market agenda as part of the "winning formula" of PRWPs. However, more recently, De Lange (De Lange 2007) has shown the convergence of these parties towards more moderate economic positions. Indeed, parties such as the French Front National have adopted more pronounced pro-redistribution positions in recent years (Ivaldi 2013). Conversely, a comparative study of five European countries shows that such « new » working class parties of the populist right (such as the SVP or the Dansk Folkeparti) oppose generous redistributive policies (Geering & Häusermann 2015).

As a whole, the socio-economic agenda of PRWPs is often deliberately "blurred" in order to satisfy different categories of voters with contradicting preferences (Mudde 2007: 137; Rovny 2013: 3). Immigration control – rather than redistribution – is the core issue that these parties politicise (Mudde 2007: 133-137). While working-class voters may vote for left parties because of their socio-economic agenda, they predominantly vote for PRWPs because of their positions on non-economic issues (Ivarsflaten 2005; Oesch 2008).

Within this context, how can we expect PRWPs to influence welfare reforms? In the following sections, we argue that PRWP preferences in the domain of welfare correspond to their “TAN” (traditional-authoritarian-nationalist) agenda, and that their impact differs across policy domains, depending on the alliances that can be struck with centre-right parties keen on welfare cutbacks. We argue that the new welfare policy space in which party alliances are struck is structured by two dimensions, namely the traditional de-commodification dimension involving how much state and how much market should regulate social risks, and an authority dimension based on the idea of “deservingness” (Van Oorschot 2006).

Indeed, besides their nativist agenda, what unites European populist right-wing parties is an emphasis for what Hooghe and Marks label “TAN” values emphasising traditional roles, the respect for authority and generally, compliance with a strict sense of morality (Bornschieer 2010). In many ways, the transposition of these non-economic values in the domain of welfare can be understood as the main driver of PRWP positions. The “authoritarian” component in particular leads them to “take an attitude of punishing out-group figures in the name of some moral authority” (Adorno in Mudde 2007: 22). We contend that the idea of “deservingness” of recipients is the most direct translation of this ideological core in the area of welfare, as shown elsewhere by Häusermann and Kriesi (2015).

A good example of this policy agenda can be found in Skocpol’s and Williamson’s (2012) analysis of the Tea Party in the United States, which shares many commonalities with European radical right parties (Minkenberg 2011). We believe that this is especially the case for the Swiss populist right, which also shares a clear aversion for the state at the level of its elites, while the orientation of its voters is more ambiguous. Hence, in spite of the fact that

“many Tea partiers rely on government welfare programs such as Medicare, social security and veterans’ social programs, they “distinguish between these programs, which recipients feel have ‘earned’, from other social benefits which they feel unnecessarily run up expenses, or might run up public costs in the future- placing a burden on hardworking taxpayers to make payments to freeloaders who have not earned public support” (Skocpol & Williamson 2012: 60).

A major difference between these programs is the extent to which recipients are perceived as “deserving” of social assistance or not, based on a dichotomy between ‘hard-working citizens’ who have “earned” their right to welfare and those that don’t. Van Oorschot (2006) shows that there are consistent popular orderings across European countries of the degree of “deservingness” of different categories of benefit recipients. Elderly people are universally seen as the most deserving, followed by sick and disabled people. Jobseekers, by contrast, are seen as less deserving. In the Swiss 2011 post-election survey *Selects*, 34.5% of respondents favoured an increase in pension spending, while only 5.5% favoured a decrease. In contrast, only 21% favoured an increase in unemployment benefit spending, while 14.9% favoured a decrease. A number of recent works have emphasised the importance of a framing of deservingness as an important factor in welfare reforms (Nelson 2015). However, few of them address differences among parties in the importance of this dimension. PRWPs can be expected to be particularly keen to emphasise these differences between “good” deserving recipients and “bad” underserving ones because this differentiation corresponds to the authoritarian and traditionalist component of their ideology.

Hence, retrenchment corresponds to PRWP agendas in domains where recipients are considered “undeserving”, such as unemployment protection, while it conflicts with it in

domains where they are considered “deserving”, such as in old-age pensions. We can therefore expect different types of alliances between PRWPs and other right-wing parties committed to fiscal consolidation depending on the configuration of these two elements: fiscal retrenchment and deservingness. When fiscal consolidation measures affect recipients perceived as “undeserving”, right-wing parties can even claim credit for retrenchment measures (Nelson 2015). In such cases, an alliance between right and populist right should push for retrenchment against the left. When fiscal consolidation affects “deserving” recipients (old age pensions is the most obvious example), however, this alliance will be more problematic, especially as the electoral base of PRWPs is particularly attached to traditional social insurance schemes (Afonso 2015: 272). We should note that there can be a difference between elites and electoral base in this respect. The cultural dimension is certainly the most important for voters, while elites may have a more economically liberal profile. This may be related to the fact that many of these parties are former liberal parties, while new voters are often working class. As a result, elites may evolve more slowly than the base in terms of economic preferences.

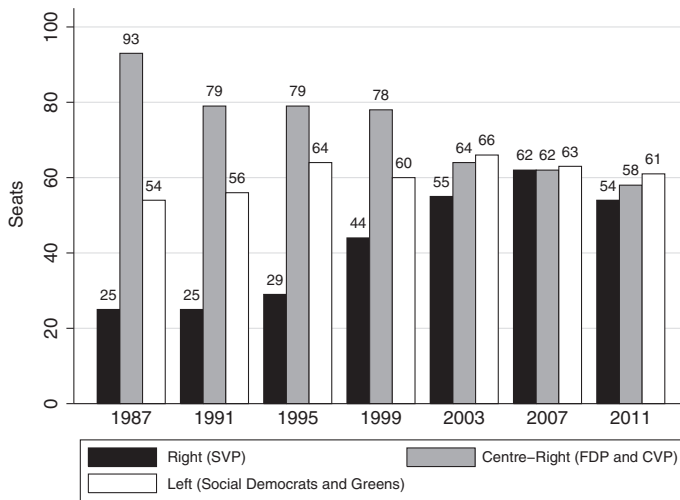
The idea that different welfare schemes entail different political logics resonates with earlier research, even if this research does not deal explicitly with the parties we are interested in. Jensen (2012), for instance, differentiates between labour market- and life course-related social programs, arguing that it is easier to retrench the former than the latter. While life-course risks (such as old-age and health) are mostly uncorrelated with income and labour market position, the median voter has a clear preference for generous insurance. In contrast, labour market risks are unequally distributed across income groups, and the median voter may ask for retrenchment in areas in which she doesn’t necessarily benefit. Here again, the fact that old age pensions benefit a majority of voters at some stage in life while unemployment only benefits a minority fits well with the logic mentioned above of out-group stigmatisation favoured by PRWP parties.

## Cases and Methods

In the next section, we assess these arguments in Switzerland. Switzerland has one of the most successful populist radical right parties in Western Europe, which makes it especially suitable to investigate the role of this party family in welfare reforms. From 11.9% of the vote in 1991, the Swiss People’s Party increased its electoral strength to 26.6% in 2011 (Figure 1). During the same period, the Liberal and Christian Democratic parties went from 21 and 18 down to 15.1% and 12.3% respectively. The party system has now clearly become tri-polar and is now composed of three major blocks: the Left (Social democrats and Greens), centre-right and “moderate” right parties (CVP and FDP, joined now by smaller splinter parties from the Greens and the SVP), and the SVP (Kriesi & Trechsel 2008; Schwarz & Linder 2006; Traber 2015).

We look at unemployment and pension reforms from the mid-1990s, when the SVP was a much weaker parliamentary force, to the late 2000s, when it came to be considered as “the most important actor in the Swiss decision-making system” (Fischer et al. 2009: 45). We consider the 1999 elections to be a turning point as the SVP outvoted its main right-wing counterpart (the FDP) for the first time. These two policy areas were chosen because of their importance for the welfare state, and because they differ regarding the perceived deservingness of recipients as proposed above (Van Oorschot 2006). The dependent variable of our analysis is the coalition patterns between political parties across different welfare reforms.

Figure 1: Number of seats in the National Council by ideological block



Our case study analysis relies on a variety of sources. These include roll-call data for the final votes in the lower chamber of parliament (*Nationalrat*) for each of these reforms,<sup>1</sup> data from voter surveys *Selects* (for federal elections) and *Vox* (for referendums), data from the Chapel Hill Expert Survey on party positions, government documents, parliamentary debates, and finally, a number of interviews with decision-makers spread between March 2007 and May 2012. Interview partners included MPs, civil servants and officials who took part in welfare and labour market policymaking during this period. We proceed with an analytical narrative of the reforms, outlining first the logic of alliances in the 1990s, and the unravelling of compromises in the 2000s. While we draw on earlier research to outline reforms before the rise of the radical right, the analysis of changes after the rise of the SVP is based on original empirical research.

### Modernizing Compromises in the 1990s

The 1990s have been a period of substantial change in labour market conditions in Switzerland. From full employment in the 1980s, unemployment increased substantially – even if in a moderate proportion compared to other countries. The increase in unemployment translated into increasing debts for the unemployment insurance scheme, especially as payroll contributions were set at low levels. In this context, cost containment has constituted the backdrop of most of the reforms that have taken place in the 1990s, but these reforms have also triggered the modernization of unemployment policy, notably through the development of “activation” measures and side-payments to the Left (Bonoli 1999; Häusermann et al. 2004).

Along these lines, the 2<sup>nd</sup> revision of the law on *unemployment insurance*, passed in 1995, combined measures of cost containment and activation. Social democrats, FDP and CVP struck a compromise combining an extension in the entitlement period with stricter

<sup>1</sup> We cannot analyse roll-call votes in the Upper Chamber (*Ständerat*) because these are only made public if 10 MPs require so, which is very rare.

requirements for job seekers to take part in labour market programmes and a massive expansion of activation measures, coupled with tougher sanctions for jobseekers failing to accept suitable jobs. Häusermann et al. (2004: 45) analyse this reform as a “modernizing compromise” because it combined measures of cost containment with measures favourable to “outsiders” through activation. Accordingly, interview partners pointed out that this type of compromise could emerge because political fronts were not as hardened as they would become later, notably because the SVP, who was still a smaller electoral force than all other major parties at the time, was not exerting as much political pressure on other right-wing parties as it would later (Interview 3).

The final compromise on unemployment policy reform was supported by all major parties. The Swiss People’s Party was the only one left out. The SVP argued that the activation measures were too costly, and that unemployment should be fought primarily through deregulation rather than an increase in public intervention (ATS 1995). In the parliamentary debates, Christoph Blocher (the party’s charismatic leader) had even argued for a 40% benefit cut during the first 40 days of entitlement as a way to increase incentives to get back to work (Bulletin officiel du Conseil National 1994: 1583). This attempt was dismissed by all other parties. In its subsequent electoral campaign, the SVP claimed that it would fight for a tougher sanction regime, especially for young workers, who should be forced to move geographically and find jobs outside their area of education. By contrast, upskilling measures should be reserved for the elderly out of work (Mieville 1995), a category considered as “deserving”.

The 10<sup>th</sup> revision of *basic pensions* passed in 1995 similarly combined measures of cost containment (an increase in the mandatory age of retirement for women) with elements of modernization providing for more gender equality, namely a splitting system of benefits for spouses and an educational bonus (Häusermann et al. 2004: 44). The partisan basis for this compromise was again a “social-liberal” coalition of segments of Social democrats, FDP and CVP, although part of the Left voted against the reform because of the increase in the age of retirement (Figure 5). While trade unions challenged the bill in a referendum, the Social democrats decided instead to support the compromise struck with the right on account of its gender equality components (Häusermann et al. 2004: 44). At first, the Swiss People’s Party opposed the principle of splitting, and championed the same age of retirement for men and women at 65 (Le Nouveau Quotidien 1993). Eventually, its MPs nevertheless supported the reform on account of its fiscal consolidation elements. The bill was accepted in the referendum that followed.

### **From Compromise to Polarization in the 2000s**

We consider the end of the 1990s, and the 1999 elections in particular when the SVP outvoted the FDP for the first time, as a turning point in patterns of coalition-building in Swiss welfare state reforms (Interviews 2 and 3). The central mechanism behind this has been the erosion of the political centre, particularly of centre-right parties. The FDP in particular has been the main loser of the electoral strengthening of the SVP. According to *Selects* survey data, 14% of SVP voters at the 1999 elections had voted FDP in 1995, while only 1% went the opposite way (Selects 1999). The rise of the SVP, who sourced a considerable share of voters from centre-right parties, has pushed them, and particularly the FDP, further to the right. This shift to the right has tended to empower conservative factions within centre-right parties over more moderate factions (Interviews 1, 4 and 6). As these moderate factions within centre-right parties were precisely those that could act as

bridges with the Left in the construction of “modernization” compromises, their weakening made the middle ground necessary for left-right compromises shrink:

“In the past, there were people like [names of FDP politicians], with whom one could find compromises. Now it’s much more left-right. In fact, now there are a few strong people, and the others follow. [...] All these [strong] people are hardliners. People who could serve as bridges [...] are missing. The SVP has played a significant role, as it has tended to pull the other parties to the right” (Interview 6) (Our translation)

“There is no doubt [that the FDP has become more right-wing]. [...] The party has tried to recover the share of the electorate who had turned to the SVP, by taking positions ever more on the right. The fact that this evolution was due to the SVP] was not made explicit, but it was more than implied. There were different wings within the FDP in parliament. A “right-right”-wing [...] and more “political”, pragmatic people like me, but this latter centrist strand has declined over the years. [...] It should still be possible to strike compromises with the Left, but you need a political will that has been lost by centre-right parties” (Interview 4) (Our translation)

If the shift to the right of the Christian-Democratic CVP has not been as visible as for the FDP, the party has still sided with the other right-wing parties in most welfare reforms, and some of its conservative factions were fairly close to the retrenchment stance adopted by SVP and FDP, especially in the Council of States (Interview 1). Even in the past, “modernizing” coalitions” mostly implicated fragments of the Social democrats and the FDP, often sidestepping the CVP.

Voters were not the only constituency that centre right parties needed to care about. The rise of the SVP also challenged their position as the traditional transmission channels for business interests within the political sphere. After the major electoral victory of the SVP in 1999, Christoph Blocher claimed that the SVP was now the only party that really represented business interests, and called centre-right parties, and particularly the FDP, to move away from ruinous compromises with the Left, especially about welfare (Le Temps 2001a). In line with this agenda of retrenchment, *Selects* (1999) survey data shows that 53% of SVP voters supported a decrease in welfare expenditures at the time of the 1999 elections. This was not only a much larger share than in 1995 (36%), but this proportion was also much larger than for any other party, including the FDP (39%). In a context of electoral weakening, the FDP and, to a lesser extent, the CVP were compelled to move further to their right about welfare retrenchment to restore their credibility vis-à-vis business interests, and recover right-wing voters (Le Temps 2001b). This was emphasised by a number of interview partners:

“The situation in the beginning and middle of the 1990s [...], was much more constructive because the political fronts were not so hardened yet. [...] What was in the background of this change [...] was what happened in Parliament [...] Right-wing parties have engaged in a competition among themselves to show who is the champion of tax cuts, who is the best to relieve top incomes and the wealthiest. I really believe this was the background of this development. [...] The change in the electoral strength of the SVP played a role, I believe” (Interview 3) (Our translation)

“Among right-wing parties, many people have said that the compromises of the 1990s were too expensive. That was a cause of polarization, and the other was the strengthening of the SVP. It

belongs together. I do not know exactly what is the cause and what is the consequence, but it belongs together. And it opened a period [...] where it became more difficult to find compromises, in essence, from 1999 onwards. [...] For me the important thing was polarization in Parliament” (Interview 2) (Our translation)

This push to the right of right-wing party elites should be considered as the general context of the reforms analysed in the 2000s in the two schemes. Data from the Chapel Hill Expert Survey 2010 (Bakker et al. 2015) also show that the SVP was the party with the most right-wing agenda in the area of welfare and redistribution. Interestingly, the position of the FDP is almost identical to the position of the SVP (Figure 2),<sup>2</sup> but the salience of redistribution is moderate in the SVP party agenda. From a strategic point of view, the moderate salience of welfare issues within the SVP agenda has also appeared practical in the face of the contradictory preferences of its electorate, and the gap between the preferences of party elites and those of voters:

“In welfare state reform we have invested a lot of energy, but one has to admit that we have often lost [in popular votes]. This is why we don’t really put forward health policy reform, in which we have often lost, or the social insurance systems. This doesn’t mean that we don’t fight for it [in parliament] with the same state of mind. But when it comes to leading an electoral campaign, it’s clear that we have a strategy to lead the battle where it suits us, that is, immigration and public safety issues” (Interview 5) (Our translation)

In Figure 3, we have plotted together the average of desired levels of spending in old age pensions and unemployment for voters of the main Swiss parties based on the *Selects 2011* post-election survey.<sup>3</sup>

On average, social-democratic and Green party voters are close and favour increased spending in both schemes, while voters of centre-right parties favour moderate cuts in unemployment and moderate increases in pensions. As Figure 3 shows, voters of the Swiss People’s Party are distant from these two blocks: they are those that both favour the most important cuts in unemployment benefits and the most important increases in pensions (even more than voters of left-wing parties).<sup>4</sup> Hence the preference of SVP voters against welfare expenditures is selective. It seems that it mainly targets those perceived as undeserving. 41% of SVP voters favour “a little more” or “much more” spending on

<sup>2</sup> PdA (French: PST) : Swiss Workers’ Party ; SPS (PSS) : Social Democratic party ; GPS (PES) : Green Party ; LdT : Ticino League ; CVP (PDC) : Christian Democratic Party ; FDP (PLR) : Free Democratic Party (Liberals) ; EVP (PEV) : Evangelical party ; BDP (PBD) : Conservative Democratic Party ; EDU (UDF) : Federal Democratic Union ; SVP (UDC) : Swiss People’s Party ; GLP (VL) Green Liberals.

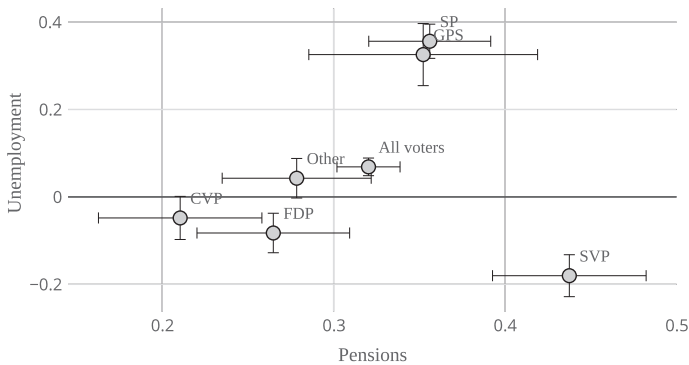
<sup>3</sup> The scatterplot indicates the average of voter responses to the question “Should the government increase or decrease spending in the following areas. Remember that increasing them could require increasing taxes and reducing them could affect their delivery” for unemployment benefits and old-age pensions. The answers have been recoded as -2: much less spending; -1 a little less; 0 = as much as now; 1 = a little more; 2 = much more. Error bars on both axes indicate the 95% confidence interval. Note that a large part of answers chose the status quo, which explains the closeness to zero. Some respondents may have answered “same as now” as an alternative to “Don’t know”.

<sup>4</sup> It should be noted that age does not seem to play a role in support for pensions: drawing on *Selects* data (2011), it appears that young SVP voters are as likely to support pension spending as older voters. This supports our idea that welfare preferences are driven by normative constructs about deservingness and not only pure self-interests, as an analysis simply based on the insider/outsider divide would imply. Studies on the electoral behaviour of PRWP voters also support the idea that their attitudes are driven more by cultural/normative factors than economic self-interest (Oesch 2008).

Figure 2: Salience and left-right position of redistribution among Swiss parties, Chapel Hill Expert Survey 2010



Figure 3: Average preferences on spending in unemployment and pensions by party (unweighted; *Selects* 2011)



pensions (54% favour the status quo), while on average 34% of all voters favour an increase.

Accordingly, this configuration has created a different potential for political alliances. Since expansion is not really on the political agenda, it is possible to anticipate retrenchment in unemployment because the voters of all main right-wing parties favour it. However, things are more complicated for pensions because of the distance between SVP voters and those of other centre-right parties. This is the backdrop of the reforms we now analyse in the two domains.

### Unemployment Reforms

Despite the increase in payroll contributions, as well as the introduction of a “solidarity contribution” on high wages<sup>5</sup> in the 1990s, unemployment insurance funds continued to

<sup>5</sup> Contributions perceived on income above the maximum insured income, thereby constituting an element of redistribution rather than insurance.

accumulate debts. This led to cost containment measures supported by a right-wing majority of the Parliament in the late 1990s (FDP, CVP and SVP), but an attempt to reduce benefits was refused by a majority of Swiss voters in 1997. Social democrats, who had voted against it in parliament, decided to refrain from launching a referendum. A small local association challenged the bill, however, and to the surprise of many, succeeded in blocking the reform (Bonoli 1999: 68).

The project of the 3<sup>rd</sup> revision of the unemployment insurance proposed by the government in 2001 – after the SVP had become the strongest right-wing party – counted three main measures (Conseil Fédéral 2001). First, payroll contributions were reduced as requested by a mandate supported by all right-wing parties, but the “solidarity contribution” on high wages was maintained. Second, the minimal period of contribution required for benefit eligibility was extended from 6 to 12 months, thereby making eligibility more restrictive (Gasser & Greub 2001). Third, the maximum duration of benefits was reduced from 520 to 400 days. As a whole, the reform essentially contained retrenchment measures, but the maintenance of the contribution on high wages was considered as an element to appease the left (Bulletin officiel du Conseil des Etats 2001: 394).

The right-wing majority in parliament dropped this only measure of compensation against the will of the government. In stark contrast with the previous reform achieved in 1995, retrenchment measures were supported by all right-wing parties against the Social Democrats without attempts to forge compromises (Interview 3). In Parliament, the SVP was a strong advocate of the reduction in the duration of benefits and the toughening of eligibility criteria (Amtliches Bulletin 2001: 1867; Interviews 3 and 4). In the final vote in the *Nationalrat*, FDP, CVP and SVP supported the bill, whereas Social democrats and Greens opposed it. Trade unions challenged the bill in a referendum, but voters nevertheless accepted it by a majority of 56.1%. In the referendum vote, the “fight against abuses” featured high among supporters of the bill, highlighting the importance of conceptions of deservingness.<sup>6</sup>

A similar pattern of reform could be observed in the following 4<sup>th</sup> reform of unemployment insurance voted in 2010. Whereas the initial project already provided for substantial cost-cutting measures, the right-wing majority introduced further cuts in allowances and more stringent eligibility requirements for workers under 30, in clear opposition with parties of the Left. All attempts by the latter to introduce increases in contributions were refused (Assemblée Fédérale 2010). In the final vote, Social democrats and Greens opposed the bill, while the CVP, FDP and about half of SVP supported it. The other half abstained considering that the reform did not go far enough in terms of retrenchment (Assemblée Fédérale 2010). It was no surprise that, together with the trade unions, the Social democrats initiated a referendum against this bill. However, once again, the bill was accepted by 53.4% of voters in September 2010, even though it only displayed retrenchment measures. In the vote, the “deservingness” argument came third (spontaneously cited by 37% of supporters), and 68% of those supporting the reform subscribed to the statement “there is still a lot of abuse in the unemployment insurance system” (Milic & Widmer 2010).

<sup>6</sup> This was the second most frequently cited reason by those voting for the reform (29%), and 74% among them agreed with the statement “[in order to be eligible] an extension of one’s contribution [to the insurance scheme] is necessary to prevent abuse” (Hirter & Linder 2002: 24-25).

As a whole, the picture of parliamentary coalitions in these cases is fairly different between the mid-1990s and the end of the 2000s (Figure 4).<sup>7</sup> A “social-liberal” coalition between centre-right parties and the Left in the early 1990s allowed for a reform combining retrenchment and activation measures benefitting labour market outsiders (Häusermann et al. 2004). In the 2000s, however, “liberal-conservative” coalitions between centre-right parties and the SVP fostered retrenchment without side-payments for the left, with a tightening of eligibility criteria for young workers. Contradicting the idea that reforms characterised by retrenchment alone could not overcome the veto point of the referendum (Bonoli 1999), the latest reforms in unemployment policy show that they can. Measures not underpinned by left-right “modernization” compromises were nevertheless passed, and ideas of “deservingness” promoted by the SVP played a substantial role.

### *Pension Reforms*

The 11<sup>th</sup> revision of the state pension scheme (AHV) displayed a much weaker willingness of right-wing parties to concede side-payments to the Left. The value-based, gender-related aspects that were important in the previous reform were dropped from the bill (Häusermann 2010). The main thrust of this reform, besides additional income through a value-added tax increase, was a further increase in the age of retirement for women – to 65, the same age as men – combined with measures aimed at workers in strenuous jobs, allowing for early retirement without bearing linear cuts in pension benefits (Conseil Fédéral 2000; Interview 4). This measure of flexibilisation for low incomes was, similarly to the solidarity contribution in unemployment reform, supposed to buy off support from the Left and trade unions. However, the right-wing majority in Parliament refused the facilitation of early retirement and only kept cost containment measures, without seeking to devise a compromise with left parties and trade unions (Figure 5).<sup>8</sup>

The SVP was described by interview partners within the centre-right as an intransigent force not actively proposing changes, but supporting a clear position of retrenchment propelled by other right-wing parties:

“The SVP has never really had an active role. Not in the commission, and even less in the plenum. They have always had the hardest position, categorically, without concessions or compromises. That’s it. There was no discussion possible. For them, it was necessary to save money, period. Take the big knife and cut, without further consideration” (Interview 4).

Social democrats and trade unions challenged the bill in a referendum, which they won by a large majority of 67% in 2004 (Engeli 2004). A majority of SVP voters refused the bill as well, in spite of the fact that its MPs had supported retrenchment and the need for fiscal consolidation. In fact, only 41% of SVP voters supported it, and blue-collar workers - who disproportionately vote for the SVP - were the social group whose biggest proportion opposed the reform (Engeli 2004). This was striking given the resolute retrenchment stance adopted by the SVP in parliament, which it appeared was not shared

<sup>7</sup> Source: Protokoll Nationalrat 1995, 23 June, p. 169. Roll-call votes for this period were only recorded by name without mention of the party affiliation in the parliamentary minutes. We have therefore coded the party affiliation by matching it with the database of MPs available on [www.parlament.ch](http://www.parlament.ch); [Parlament.ch](http://Parlament.ch); Electronic Voting system: Ref 2181, identif: 46.11/22.03.2002 ; Electronic Voting System Nationalrat: Identif: 48.13/19.03.2010.

<sup>8</sup> Source: Protokoll Nationalrat, 7. Oktober 1994, p. 1961 ; Electronic voting system, identif: 46.20/3.10.2003, 8:50 ; Electronic voting system, Identif.: 48.15 / 01.10.2010 09:16:50

Figure 4: Party coalitions in unemployment policy reforms, 1995-2010

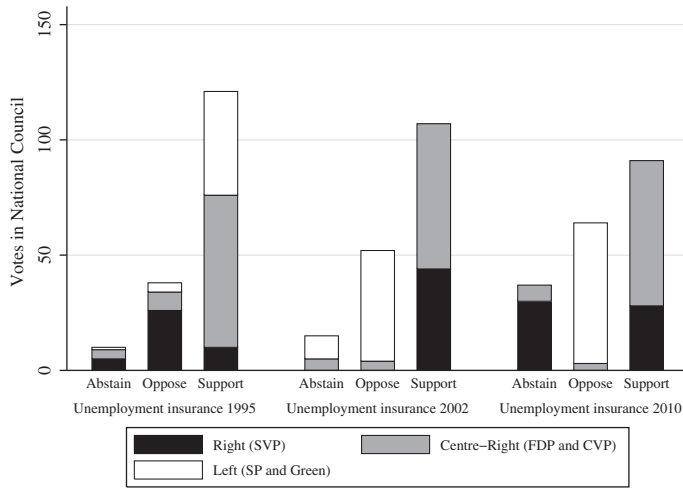
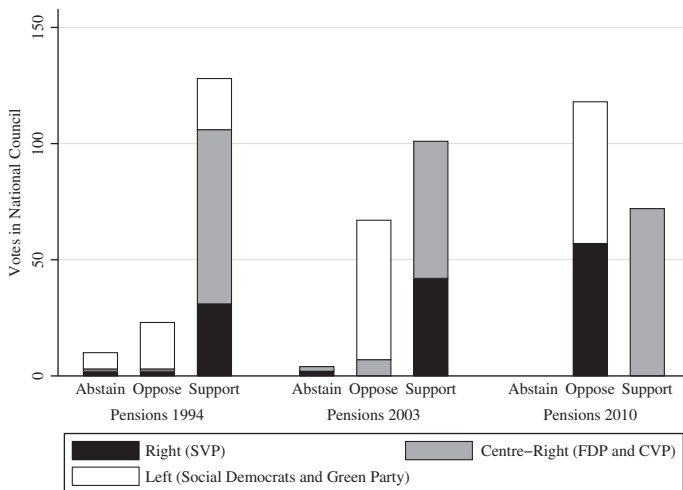


Figure 5: Party coalitions in pension reforms, 1994-2010



by the party’s own voters. This distance between voters and elites was acknowledged by interview partners within the party (Interviews 5 and 7).

After the failure of the previous revision, the same issues were brought back again in parliament in 2005. In the face of previous conflicts, this reform would be considerably protracted. Nearly five years passed between the time when the government published its initial proposal (December 2005) and the final vote in Parliament (October 2010). FDP and CVP initially tried to strike a compromise allowing for substantial measures of budget consolidation and, again, an increase in the age of retirement for women, while allowing for some degree of flexibility for early retirement (Feuille Fédérale 2005). In order to compensate for the greater expenditures caused by this latter measure, the

indexation of pension benefits to inflation would have been made at greater intervals, resulting in real-terms cuts for existing recipients. While such a compromise was passed in the Council of States, where FDP and CVP hold a majority, it was ultimately defeated in the lower chamber by a blocking coalition of Social democrats and the Swiss People's Party. For the Social democrats, this reform involved too many measures of retrenchment and not enough opportunities for workers in strenuous occupations to retire early. The Swiss People's Party considered it by contrast as an "irresponsible extension of social protection" and denounced its elements of welfare expansion (SVP 2010). However, the party also opposed cuts in the adjustment of existing benefits to inflation (benefitting "insiders" of the scheme) while refusing the extension of early retirement.

Since the SVP had championed cuts that were defeated by a majority of its own electorate in the previous revision, undermining this reform in parliament was also a way to avoid difficult internal conflicts in the event of a referendum and in anticipation of the federal elections the following year. In spite of the general commitment of the SVP to fiscal austerity, cuts in existing pensions were considered problematic for the two most important clienteles of the party: blue-collar workers, but also self-employed individuals who could not rely on an occupational pension scheme (Interviews 5 and 7).

Similarly to unemployment policy reform, balanced compromises in pension reform were followed more recently by attempts of unilateral retrenchment in parliament. Unlike unemployment policy reform, however, pension reforms failed either in a referendum (in 2003) or in parliament (in 2010), causing gridlock and policy stalemate. In this context, it is interesting to note that the SVP as a retrenchment force turned out to be a giant with feet of clay because its own electorate has not been willing to retrench areas where recipients are seen as "deserving". Even if we focus here on the AHV basic pension scheme ("first pillar"), a very similar pattern could be observed in the latest reforms of the occupational pension scheme ("second pillar"). Hence, a change in the conversion rate that would have provided for net cuts in occupational pensions was massively refused by 72% of Swiss voters in 2010 while it had been supported by the CVP, FDP and SVP and gathered support from two thirds of Parliament (Swissinfo 2010).

## Conclusion

In this paper, we show the decline of left-right compromises in major welfare policy issues in Switzerland since the end of the 1990s. We argue that this decline finds its origin in the erosion of the political centre to the advantage of the Swiss People's Party and the empowerment of more conservative factions within right-wing parties. However, given that the electorate of the SVP does not necessarily share the positions of its elites on social policy issues, especially on pension reforms, this particular policy area has been facing a longstanding gridlock. Polarization creates a situation where reforms have to be more focused on cost-containment to pass parliament, but by doing so they entail an increased risk of failure at the polls. Hence, the hurdles for winning a majority in parliament and at the polls seem to diverge increasingly in this field.<sup>9</sup> The reforms that survived both the parliamentary and the referendum veto points were those that could be framed as targeting "undeserving" recipients of social benefits. This was the case of unemployment reforms.

---

<sup>9</sup> We thank one reviewer for summarizing our argument so accurately.

Is the rise of the populist right the only factor that explains the decline of left-right compromises in Switzerland? A functionalist explanation could be that the economic context has made it more difficult to provide side-payments in the form of increased spending. However, the economic context did not deteriorate substantially in the 2000s as compared to the 1990s. On the contrary, the 1990s have been considered by many as a “lost decade” in terms of growth, while the Swiss economy underwent an upturn from 2003 onwards up to the 2008 financial crisis. Yet, social policy-making became ever more polarized despite this more favourable economic situation. A second possible explanation could be that the policy space for left-right compromises may have reached its limits. First, the range of “modernization” measures that can be used to compensate the Left is not unlimited. Side-payments discussed in recent pension reforms, such as early retirement for strenuous jobs, were not really “modernization” measures, and essentially benefitted working-class voters and not the new middle-classes who vote for Social democratic parties.<sup>10</sup> This is an important element of context but does not challenge the argument about changing dynamics of coalition-building, most notably the observation that right-wing parties became more intransigent under the influence of the SVP.

One should also mention a number of cases where left-right compromises still emerged in social policies. However, these cases are clearly the exception. One of them is the establishment of a maternity insurance leave in 2005. Accordingly, this case displayed a similar coalition as that observed in other domains in the early 1990s, with the SVP being side-lined (Kuebler 2007). Another situation where the left-right conflict is not predominant is when irreconcilable differences persist between the SVP and the more moderate right-wing parties (FDP and CVP). This notably included labour market issues related to the free movement of workers with the EU, a domain where the positions of the SVP and centre-right parties could not be accommodated (Afonso 2013).

Therefore, we should be cautious with generalizations across policy sectors inspired from the case of social policy. Traber (2015) finds significant variation across policy sectors in the composition of legislative coalitions, and the SVP is frequently isolated in cultural, institutional, European and immigration issues. Sciarini et al. (2015: 246) find that the Social Democratic Party has been fairly successful and belonged to the dominant coalition in 5 cases out of the 11 they analysed.

What about the generalization of our findings to other countries? On the one hand, a comparative study of electoral manifestoes in five countries (not including Switzerland, and not investigating policy output) concludes that the contagion of mainstream parties by their populist competitors remains limited (Rooduijn et al. 2014). On the other hand, retrenchment measures promoted by centre-right parties with the support of the populist right have been pointed out in the cases of Austria, and the Netherlands, however with varying fates due to similar pro-welfare preferences among PRWP voters (Afonso 2015; Heinisch 2003). Finally, our findings are congruent with results from large-N studies that show considerably smaller cuts to pensions than to unemployment or sickness benefits (Jensen 2012). Hence, although one should be cautious with generalisations, the changing

---

<sup>10</sup> In fact, other European countries are actually trying to increase negative incentives to early exit from the labour market. In Switzerland, the room for manoeuvre for modernizing compromises may be larger in the second pillar of pension reform, which might be one reason why the government intends now to reform the second and the first pillar together (*Rentenreform 2020*), in order to use the modernizing elements of the second pillar to “sell” the reform in the first pillar. We thank the same reviewer for drawing our attention to that point too. However the fate of *Rentenreform 2020* remains for the moment uncertain.

patterns of party coalitions under the pressure of PRWPs have also been at work elsewhere. The same applies to differences in reform capacity across different social policy schemes. Besides functional differences across policy fields, we have shown that these differences can be explained by coalitional dynamics as well.

## Acknowledgements

We would like to thank Silja Häusermann, Giuliano Bonoli, Damian Raess, Philippe Gottraux, Bernard Voutat, André Mach, Patrick Emmenegger and anonymous reviewers for useful suggestions and comments on the article, as well as to Line Rennwald for supplying her recoded data on class and electoral behaviour. Funding by the Swiss National Fund in the framework of the NCCR Democracy (Phase 1) is gratefully acknowledged. Thanks to the British Heart Foundation charity shop in London Holloway Road, where one of the authors serendipitously found very useful references for this article.

## References

- Afonso, A. (2013). *Social Concertation in Times of Austerity*. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press.
- (2015). “Choosing Whom to Betray: Populist Right-Wing Parties, Welfare State Reforms and the Trade-Off Between Office and Votes”, *European Political Science Review* 7(2): 271–292.
- Amtliches Bulletin. (2001). *AB 2001 N 1867*. Bern: Parlamentsdienste.
- Arzheimer, K. (2012). “Working-Class Parties 2.0?” in Rydgen, J. (ed.) *Class Politics and the Radical Right*. London: Routledge: 75–90.
- Assemblée Fédérale. (2010). “08.062 Loi sur l’assurance-chômage. Note de synthèse.”, [http://www.parlament.ch/f/suche/pages/legislaturrueckblick.aspx?rb\\_id=20080062](http://www.parlament.ch/f/suche/pages/legislaturrueckblick.aspx?rb_id=20080062)
- ATS. (1995). “Le Conseil National Sauve La Revision De La Loi Sur L’assurance Chomage”, *Journal de Genève*, 9.6.1995, 23.
- Bakker, R., C. De Vries, E. Edwards, L. Hooghe, S. Jolly and G. Marks. (2015). “Measuring Party Positions in Europe: the Chapel Hill Expert Survey Trend File, 1999-2010”. *Party Politics* 21(1): 143–152.
- Bonoli, G. (1999). “La réforme de l’Etat social suisse: contraintes institutionnelles et opportunités de changement”. *Revue Suisse de Science Politique* 5(3): 57–77.
- Bornschieer, S. (2010). *Cleavage Politics and the Populist Right: The New Cultural Conflict in Western Europe*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press.
- (2015). “The New Cultural Conflict, Polarization, and Representation in the Swiss Party System, 1975-2007”, *Swiss Political Science Review* 21(4): 680–701.
- Bulletin Officiel du Conseil des Etats. (2001). *Session d’été 2001*. Bern: Parlamentsdienste.
- Bulletin Officiel du Conseil National. (1994). *Session d’automne 1994*. Bern: Parlamentsdienste.
- Conseil Fédéral. (2000). “Message concernant la 11e révision de l’assurance-vieillesse et survivants et le financement à moyen terme de l’assurance-vieillesse, survivants et invalidité”. *Feuille Fédérale* 2000: 1771–1936.
- Conseil Fédéral. (2001). “Message concernant la révision de la loi sur l’assurance-chômage”. *Feuille Fédérale* 2001: 2123–2218.
- De Lange, S. (2007). “A New Winning Formula? The Programmatic Appeal of the Radical Right”. *Party Politics* 13(4): 411–435.
- Engeli, I. (2004). *Analyse des votations fédérales du 16 mai 2004*. Geneva: Vox.

- Feuille Fédérale. (2005). “05.093 11e révision de l’AVS (nouvelle version). Premier message”, <https://www.admin.ch/opc/fr/federal-gazette/2006/1917.pdf>
- Fischer, M., A. Fischer, P. Sciarini, et al. (2009). “Power and Conflict in the Swiss Political Elite: An Aggregation of Existing Network Analyses”. *Swiss Political Science Review* 15(1): 31–62.
- Ford, R. and M.J. Goodwin. (2014). *Revolt on the Right*. London: Routledge.
- Fossati, F. and S. Häusermann. (2014). “Social Policy Preferences and Party Choice in the 2011 Swiss Elections”. *Swiss Political Science Review* 20(4): 590–611.
- Gasser, P. and U. Greub. (2001). “La révision de la loi sur l’assurance-chômage par le menu”. *La Vie Economique* 2001(6): 13–18.
- Geering, D. and S. Häusermann. (2015). “Changing Party Electorates and Economic Realignment: Explaining Party Positions on Labor Market Policy in Western Europe”, *Unpublished manuscript*.
- Häusermann, S. (2010). *The Politics of Welfare State Reform in Continental Europe*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Häusermann, S. and H. Kriesi. (2015). “What Do Voters Want? Dimensions and Configurations in Individual-level Preferences and Party Choice” in Beramendi, P., S. Häusermann, H. Kitschelt and H. Kriesi, *The Politics of Advanced Capitalism*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press: 202–230.
- Häusermann, S., A. Mach, I. Papadopoulos, et al. (2004). “From Corporatism to Partisan Politics: Social Policy Making Under Strain in Switzerland”. *Swiss Political Science Review* 10(2): 33–59.
- Häusermann, S., G. Picot, D. Geering, et al. (2013). “Rethinking Party Politics and the Welfare State”. *British Journal of Political Science* 43(1): 221–240.
- Häusermann, S. and S. Walter. (2010). “Restructuring Swiss Welfare Politics: Post-Industrial Labour Markets, Globalization and Attitudes Towards Social Policies” in Kriesi, H. and S. Hug (eds.) *Value Change in Switzerland*. Lanham: Lexington Books: 143–168.
- Heinisch, R. (2003). “Success in Opposition-Failure in Government: Explaining the Performance of Right-Wing Populist Parties in Public Office”. *West European Politics* 26(3): 91–130.
- Hirter, H. and W. Linder. (2002). *Analyse des votations fédérales du 24 novembre 2002*. Bern: VOX/Uni Bern.
- Hooghe, L., G. Marks and C.J. Wilson. (2002). “Does Left/right Structure Party Positions on European Integration?” *Comparative Political Studies* 35(8): 965–989.
- Ivaldi, G. (2013). “A New Radical Right Economic Agenda? The Transformation of the Front National in France”, *Paper presented at the workshop on ‘Radical Right-wing Populists and the Economy’*, University of Groningen, 3-4 October 2013.
- Ivaresflaten, E. (2005). “The Vulnerable Populist Right Parties”. *European Journal of Political Research* 44(3): 465–492.
- Jensen, C. (2012). “Labour Market-Versus Life Course-Related Social Policies”. *Journal of European Public Policy* 19(2): 275–291.
- Kitschelt, H. (1994). *The Transformation of European Social Democracy*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Kitschelt, H. and A.J. McGann. (1995). *The Radical Right in Western Europe*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.
- Korpi, W. (1983). *The Democratic Class Struggle*. London: Routledge.
- Kriesi, H., E. Grande, R. Lachat, M. Dolezal, S. Bornschieer and T. Frey. (2008). *West European Politics in the Age of Globalization*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Kriesi, H. and A.H. Trechsel. (2008). *The Politics of Switzerland: Continuity and Change in a Consensus Democracy*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Kuebler, D. (2007). “Understanding the Recent Expansion of Swiss Family Policy: An Idea-Centred Approach”. *Journal of Social Policy* 36(2): 217–237.

- Le Nouveau Quotidien*. (1993). "Les femmes travailleront deux ans de plus", 11.3.1993, 7.
- Le Temps*. (2001a). "Christoph Blocher vise le talon d'Achille des radicaux", 21.03.2001.
- Le Temps*. (2001b). "Comment l'UDC entraîne le PRD et le PDC vers la droite", 21.03.2001.
- Mieville, D. (1995). "L'UDC entre en campagne sur l'assurance chômage". *Journal de Genève* 5(7): 1995.
- Milic, T. and T. Widmer. (2010). *Analyse de la votation fédérale du 26 septembre 2010*. Zurich: IPZ.
- Minkenberg, M. (2011). "The Tea Party and American Populism Today: Between Protest, Patriotism and Paranoia". *Der Moderne Staat* 4(2): 283–296.
- Mudde, C. (2007). *Populist Radical Right Parties in Europe*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Nelson, M. (2015). "Credit-Claiming Or Blame Avoidance? Comparing the Relationship Between Welfare State Beliefs and the Framing of Social Policy Retrenchment in France and Germany", *Journal of Comparative Policy Analysis: Research and Practice*, Published online before print May 18, 2015, doi: 10.1080/13876988.2015.1005928.
- Oesch, D. (2008). "Explaining Workers' Support for Right-Wing Populist Parties in Western Europe". *International Political Science Review* 29(3): 349–373.
- Oesch, D. and L. Rennwald. (2010). The Class Basis of Switzerland's Cleavage Between the New Left and the Populist Right. *Swiss Political Science Review* 16(3): 343–371.
- Rooduijn, M., S.L. De Lange and W. Van Der Brug. (2014). "A Populist Zeitgeist? Programmatic Contagion By Populist Parties in Western Europe". *Party Politics* 20(4): 563–575.
- Rovny, J. (2013). "Where Do Radical Right Parties Stand?" *European Political Science Review* 5(1): 1–26.
- Rydgren, J. (ed.) (2012). *Class Politics and the Radical Right*. London: Routledge.
- Schumacher, G. and K. Kersbergen. (2014). "Do Mainstream Parties Adapt to the Welfare Chauvinism of Populist Parties?" , *Party Politics*, Published online before print September 22, 2014, doi: 10.1177/1354068814549345 .
- Schwarz, D. and W. Linder. (2006). *Mehrheits-und Koalitionsbildung im schweizerischen Nationalrat 1996-2005*. Bern: Institut für Politikwissenschaft.
- Sciarini, P. (2015). "Conclusion" in P., Sciarini M. , Fischer, and D. Traber (eds.) *Political Decision-Making in Switzerland. The Consensus Model Under Pressure*. Palgrave: Basingstoke: 238–259.
- Selects. (1999-2011). *Selects: Elections Federales. Datasets 1999-2011*. Bern: GFS.
- Skocpol, T. and V. Williamson. (2012). *The Tea Party and the Remaking of Republican Conservatism*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- SVP. (2010). "Une extension irresponsable de l'Etat social a été empêchée", <http://www.udc.ch/actualites/communiqués-de-presse/une-extension-irresponsable-de-letat-social-a-ete-empechee/>
- Swank, D. and H.G. Betz. (2003). "Globalization, the Welfare State and Right-Wing Populism in Western Europe". *Socio-Economic Review* 1(2): 215–245.
- Swissinfo. (2010). "La baisse du taux de conversion a été balayée", Swissinfo 7.3.2010, <http://www.swissinfo.ch/fre/la-baisse-du-taux-de-conversion-a-%C3%A9t%C3%A9-balay%C3%A9/8430802>
- Traber, D. (2015). "Disenchanted Swiss Parliament? Electoral Strategies and Coalition Formation", *Swiss Political Science Review* 21(4): 702–723.
- Van Kersbergen, K. (1995). *Social Capitalism: A Study of Christian Democracy and the Welfare State*. London: Routledge.
- Van Kersbergen, K. and B. Vis. (2013). *Comparative Welfare State Politics: Development, Opportunities, and Reform*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Van Oorschot, W. (2006). "Making the Difference in Social Europe: Deservingness Perceptions among Citizens of European Welfare States". *Journal of European Social Policy* 16 (1): 23–42.

**List of interviews cited in the text**

- Interview 1, MP Council of States, Social Democratic Party, 01.03.2007, Geneva, transcribed.
- Interview 2, Former official of the Swiss Trade Union Federation, 11.12.2007, Bern, transcribed.
- Interview 3, Social Democratic MP and Former Vice President of Social Democratic Party, 06.05.2008, Bern, transcribed.
- Interview 4, Former FDP MP, Phone Interview, 1.5.2012.
- Interview 5, Former SVP MP, Phone interview, 23.5.2012.
- Interview 6, MP Social Democratic Party, 20.03.2007, Bern.
- Interview 7, SVP MP, Phone interview, 21.5.2012.

---

*Alexandre Afonso* is an Assistant Professor at the University of Leiden, the Netherlands. His research focuses on labour market and welfare state reforms, the Eurozone crisis, the political economy of immigration and the role of populist right-wing parties in policymaking. His book *Social Concertation in Times of Austerity* (Amsterdam University Press, 2010) investigates the determinants of cooperation between trade unions, employers and governments in Western Europe. *Address for correspondence:* Leiden University, Institute of Public Administration – Campus den Haag, Schouwburgstraat 2, 2511 VA The Hague, The Netherlands. Email: a.afonso@cdh.leidenuniv.nl.

*Yannis Papadopoulos* is a Professor of Swiss politics and public policy at the University of Lausanne. His work focuses on transformations of governance. He recently co-edited the *Handbuch der Schweizer Politik – Manuel de la politique suisse* (NZZ Libro, 2014). *Address for correspondence:* IEPHI, Université de Lausanne, Geopolis, UNIL, CH-1015 Lausanne, Switzerland. Email: ioannis.papadopoulos@unil.ch