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Abstract

In the past ten years, the Swiss People's Party (SVP) has run election campaigns with a distinct Euroscepticism. This thesis seeks to analyze the impact of the European refugee crisis on the Eurosceptic frames of the SVP, specifically before, during, and after the European refugee crisis (2011-2020). Euroscepticism is a characteristic often associated with EU member states and recent literature has underscored the importance of crisis in the rise of Euroscepticism. The study will employ a discourse analysis based on the conceptual framework created by Pirro and van Kessel (2018) to investigate the frames of Eurosceptic discourse within the SVP's published party programs and other resources. The important contribution of this study is the testing of the current methodology for assessing Euroscepticism in EU member states in non-EU member states, as well as highlighting the Euroscepticism found in the SVP, which is underrepresented in academic literature. This thesis is the first comprehensive investigation of the SVP's rhetoric in regard to Euroscepticism and identifies a link between crises, Euroscepticism, and voting behavior.

In den letzten zehn Jahren hat die Schweizerische Volkspartei (SVP) Wahlkämpfe mit einer ausgeprägten Euroskepsis geführt. In dieser Arbeit soll der Einfluss der europäischen Flüchtlingskrise auf die euroskeptischen Einstellungen der SVP analysiert werden, insbesondere vor, während und nach der europäischen Flüchtlingskrise (2011-2020). Euroskepsis ist ein Merkmal, das häufig mit EU-Mitgliedstaaten in Verbindung gebracht wird, und die jüngste Literatur hat die Bedeutung von Krisen für den Anstieg der Euroskepsis hervorgehoben. Die Studie verwendet eine Diskursanalyse, die auf dem von Pirro und van Kessel (2018) entwickelten konzeptionellen Rahmen basiert, um den Rahmen des euroskeptischen Diskurses in den veröffentlichten Parteiprogrammen der SVP und anderen Ressourcen zu untersuchen. Der wichtige Beitrag dieser Studie besteht darin, die derzeitige Methodik zur Bewertung des Euroskeptizismus in EU-Mitgliedstaaten in Nicht-EU-Mitgliedstaaten zu testen und den in der akademischen Literatur unterrepräsentierten Euroskeptizismus in der SVP hervorzuheben. Diese Arbeit ist die erste umfassende Untersuchung der Rhetorik der SVP in Bezug auf Euroskepsis und zeigt einen Zusammenhang zwischen Krisen, Euroskepsis und Wahlverhalten auf.

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1 Introduction

“Why should we adapt to an obviously worse system, which is characterized by youth unemployment, symptoms of poverty, remoteness from the citizens, bureaucracy and centralism? The successful values of Switzerland such as freedom, independence, neutrality, direct democracy, federalism and market economy must be defended incessantly.” (Schweizerische Volkspartei [Party Program of 2015-2019] 2015, 14)

Public support for far-right parties has gradually grown in recent years in a number of European countries (Green, Sarasin, Baur & Fasel 2016, 465). A sizable corpus of scholarly research in political science, history, and sociology has focused on populism for more than 40 years, providing critical insights into the phenomenon and its significance in electoral and legislative politics (Bonikowski 2017, 10). Since academics discovered that populism is a common characteristic of democratic politics that cuts across ideological views and geographic locations, these findings have become more and more consistent (Bonikowski 2017, 10).

Researchers have demonstrated for some time that populist and Eurosceptic beliefs are mostly supported by the same rationales: opposition to major political parties and the view of “falling out” as a consequence of Europeanization and the impact of globalization (Leconte 2015 225). A new rift between losers and winners of the Europeanization and globalization processes has reshaped European party systems and researchers have examined Euroscepticism as a component of broader, global dynamics affecting them (Leconte 2015 225). The new populist right parties in Europe, which combine anti-immigration sentiments, Euroscepticism, and antagonism to cultural liberalism, are cleaved along this line, and this division is a crucial component of its rhetoric (Leconte 2015 225). Particularly the effect of crises, such as the Great Recession and the European refugee crisis, led to an increase in Eurosceptic and populist sentiment across Europe (Pirro & Taggart 2018).

However, Eurosceptic sentiment is not limited to member states of the European Union (EU). Skinner (2013) analyzes the definition and roots of Euroscepticism in non-member states. According to the author, there are many different ways to interpret Euroscepticism, including resistance to joining the EU, disagreement with certain EU policies, and opposition to greater integration. According to Skinner (2013, 122), the absence of research about various forms of Euroscepticism in non-member states is remarkable. There is limited research conducted that

examines how diverse forms of Euroscepticism exist in the European countries that have opted not to join the Union (Skinner 2013, 122).

Switzerland is an example of this. Although the state is relatively small, it is socially and culturally diverse: the nation is split into numerous language regions and has various levels of urbanization (Favero 2021, 252). As a result, a federalist conceptual framework with a focus on independent subnational organizations maintains the polity (Favero 2021, 252). The cooperative style of Swiss politics makes the national parties relatively weak (Favero 2021, 253). The Swiss People's Party (*Schweizerische Volkspartei* [SVP]) is commonly referred to as one of Central Europe's largest and most prosperous populist radical right parties in academic research. Due to their popularity with voters and the consequent fall in support for traditional parties, populists are being more and more acknowledged by major political parties as prospective coalition partners (Albertazzi & Mueller 2013, 343). The SVP developed a unique vote-seeking strategy with the emergence of new party leadership under Christoph Blocher in the 1990s and achieved organizational growth and electoral success, though, and this stable system underwent a significant transformation (Favero 2021, 253). The SVP consistently increased in popularity among voters from the middle of the 1990s until 2007, the SVP consistently increased its percentage of the vote, and it continues to be the nation's strongest party today (Favero 2021, 254). Since the 1990s, the SVP has been very vocal against most types of integration into the EU. In 1992, the SVP launched a campaign against joining the European Economic Area (EEA). The agreement was rejected by Swiss voters with a slim majority of 50.3% (Jenni 2016, 2, 11). After the SVP did not oppose the bilateral agreements with the EU, these treaties were accepted by the electorate (Schwok 2021, 38, 43-44). However, in the following years after ratification, the SVP launched several popular initiatives to restrict immigration from EU countries (Schwok 2021, 38, 43-44).

This thesis aims to analyze the impact of the European refugee crisis on the Eurosceptic frames of the SVP. Therefore, this forms the following research question: How did the utilization of Eurosceptic frames in the SVP change over the course of nine years (2011-2020), specifically before, during, and after the European refugee crisis?

The nature of Euroscepticism in the SVP will be analyzed in qualitative terms on the basis of the theoretical framework developed by Pirro and van Kessel (2018). The authors have identified four Populist Eurosceptic frame categorizations: The socioeconomic, cultural,

sovereignty, and legitimacy frame (Pirro & van Kessel 2018, 3). This thesis will categorize the employed rhetoric by the SVP and aim to identify how the quality and quantity of Eurosceptic frames develop over the years. The research data in this thesis is drawn from two main sources: The party programs (2011-2015, 2015-2019, 2019-2023) and the “*argumentarium*” of the SVP for the Federal popular initiatives which aim to limit the free movement of persons with the EU, namely “Against Mass Immigration” in 2015 and “For Moderate Immigration (Limitation Initiative)” in 2020. An *argumentarium* includes the arguments of a certain party which presents arguments to the reader in order to encourage them to vote in line with the party. Lastly, to complement the analysis, the electoral success of the SVP will be highlighted as well, in order to evaluate the resonance of Eurosceptic rhetoric among the electorate.

The examination of Euroscepticism in the SVP, which is underrepresented in scholarly literature, is where this paper plays a crucial role. Particularly due to the fact that Euroscepticism is a phenomenon mostly studied in connection with member states of the EU. Right-wing parties, notably the radical right and populist SVP, have dominated the opposition to Switzerland joining the EU (Sarrasin, Kuhn & Lancee 2018, 206). The SVP has been steadily growing its voter share from the 1980s until the early 2010s and currently holds more than a quarter of the seats in the Federal Assembly and is considered the largest political group in Switzerland (Sarrasin et al. 2018, 206). Left-wing political parties in Switzerland often favor joining the EU, in contrast to other non-EU members (e.g., Norway) (Sarrasin et al. 2018, 206).

Complementary to this, the general framework developed by Pirro and Taggart (2018) which aims to examine populist politics of Euroscepticism in times of crisis will be applied to analyze the impact of the European refugee crisis. During times of crisis, populist political parties with Eurosceptic views are often viewed as the ones who benefit the most (Pirro & Taggart 2018). The framework aims to provide the conceptual and analytical tools to identify populist Eurosceptic actors. However, it is worth noting that this framework has not been utilized in the case of a non-EU member state. Therefore, this thesis will test this or may thus need to improve certain parts of the framework.

In early research, Euroscepticism was exclusively studied in a limited academic range (Leconte 2015, 250). However, in recent years, the critical attitude towards the EU has become a prominent political phenomenon, attracting attention and raising questions about the future of

European integration (Leconte 2015, 251; Szewczyk 2021, 50). As was already indicated, there is little academic research on Euroscepticism concerning non-member states.

The remainder of this thesis will be divided in the following manner: The second chapter will present recent literature on Euroscepticism in member states and non-members states of the EU, as well as Euroscepticism in times of crisis. Chapter Three will explain the conceptual framework of framing which will be used as a basis for the discourse analysis as well as the framework developed by Pirro and van Kessel (2018). Following this, the fourth chapter illustrates the methodology. The fifth chapter presents an extensive overview of SVP's background, the historic relations between Switzerland and the European Union, the European refugee crisis, and a discussion of popular initiatives as a populist tool. The main analysis will be conducted in the sixth chapter, which aims to answer the research question as previously laid out. The final chapter provides the conclusion and limitations of this thesis, as well as suggestions for future studies.

2 Literature Review: Euroscepticism

2.1 Euroscepticism in Member States of the European Union

Euroscepticism, or the critical attitude towards the European Union, has become a prominent political phenomenon in recent years, attracting attention and raising questions about the future of European integration. The idea of “Euroscepticism” was once exclusive to a limited community of academics studying the EU, but it is increasingly discernible in the official rhetoric of EU institutions and national politicians (Leconte 2015, 250). Since the EU constitutional reform process was disrupted in 2005, both policymakers and experts have made it their express mission to combat Euroscepticism and acknowledge it as a problem (Leconte 2015, 250).

Despite the apparent agreement that being anti-European is undesirable, few people have attempted to properly examine this idea (Leconte 2015, 250). According to Szewczyk (2021, 50), the term Euroscepticism has become an encompassing and thus, ambiguous term; Euroscepticism lacks a generally accepted definition (Leconte 2015, 251). As the term Euroscepticism emerged, media and academic scholars have employed the term in a manner that Euroscepticism is tailored to the individual political background of various nations, which is dictated by past political traditions or experiences with European integration (Szewczyk 2021, 50). Leconte (2015) demonstrates that in light of this diversity, the research on Euroscepticism is beginning to move away from its prior EU-centrism and is progressively drawing knowledge and insight from the scientific literature on populism, another contentious notion.

Pirro and Taggart (2018, 257) define Euroscepticism as the expression of the notion of absolute rejection of the European integration process. Furthermore, they distinguish between “hard” and “soft” kinds of Euroscepticism in accordance with the majority of literature on the topic: “Hard” Euroscepticism is opposition to one's nation entering or staying a member state of the EU as well as an outright rejection of the overall idea of European political and economic unity (Pirro & Taggart 2018, 257). Contrarily, “soft” Euroscepticism refers to ambivalent or qualified resistance to European integration (Pirro & Taggart 2018, 257).

Since “hard” Eurosceptic parties are adamantly opposed to EU membership and want their nation to leave the Union, this type of policy can be found on both the left and the right of the political spectrum (De Vries 2018). On the left, there is, for example, the Communist Party in

Greece, the United Democratic Coalition in Portugal, and the Left Party in Sweden. On the right, the National Front of Marine Le Pen in France, the Party for Freedom of Geert Wilders in the Netherlands, and the United Kingdom Independence Party are taken as examples. Few “hard” Eurosceptic parties can be challenging to categorize as left or right such as the Five Star Movement in Italy, for example.

Various other typologies, such as Kopecky and Mudde's difference between Euroscepticism as such and Europhobia, have been proposed, detailing various levels of objection to European integration (Leconte 2015, 251). Another illustration is the six-point continuum of party positions proposed by Flood and Usherwood, which ranges from a straightforward opposition to the EU to a maximalist attitude in favor of a federal Europe (Leconte 2015, 251).

Brack and Startin (2015) discuss the rise of Euroscepticism from a fringe political movement to a mainstream one and contend that several issues, such as the Eurozone crisis, immigration, and the belief that the EU is remote from its member states, have contributed to the rise of Euroscepticism. Simultaneously, there has been an emergence of populist and far-right groups.

It was believed that public opinion served as a passive sort of support for the actions of national government leaders in Brussels since they would be protecting national interests; a tolerant consensus defined public sentiment (De Vries 2018). However, this circumstance has evolved, and an increasing number of Europeans are opposing what their political and economic leadership sees as being the nation's best interest (De Vries 2018). While the EU now depends on popular support more than ever, the European idea itself is coming under more and more criticism – one of the reasons is that the EU might be seen as the pinnacle of elite endeavors, acting against popular sentiment and in accordance with undemocratic principles from a populist viewpoint (De Vries 2018; Pirro & van Kessel 2018).

2.2 Euroscepticism in Non-Member States of the European Union

Thus far, academic literature has focused on the Euroscepticism of member states of the EU. However, Eurosceptic sentiment is not limited to them. As indicated in the introduction, the current state of research which lacks studies on different types of Euroscepticism in non-member nations is noteworthy (Skinner 2013, 122).

In 2004, Church (2004) identified a high degree of Euroscepticism in Switzerland and explored how heated anti-European speech may be found in public opinion, direct democratic voting, and everyday politics in Switzerland, which is more immersed in Euroscepticism than is frequently recognized. The actors that are primarily responsible for instigating this sentiment are right-wing parties like the SVP and specialized groups like *Aktion für eine unabhängige und neutrale Schweiz* (Action for an independent and neutral Switzerland [AUNS]), who receive support from the lower middle class in German-speaking Switzerland (Church 2004).

In the same year, Theiler (2004) attempted to trace the origins of Euroscepticism in German-speaking Switzerland by examining the country's historical and cultural linkages to the idea of direct democracy and the value put on national sovereignty. As a result of being part of a state that lacks a single national identity and is characterized in civic and institutional terms rather than cultural ones, it renders them more vulnerable to the civic and institutional objectives of the European Union (Theiler 2004, 635). Furthermore, the German-speaking region of Switzerland is a cultural and linguistic territory with rather weak cultural boundaries and a lack of institutional support and articulation (Theiler 2004, 635). Therefore, the Swiss-German electorate, caught in this identity dilemma, has grown vulnerable and has the desire to minimize engagement outside the region and the nation (Theiler 2004, 635). The degree of national identity is an important factor in Euroscepticism (Bogado, Bytze & Steffens 2023, 1). The degree of Swiss culture, which does not feature strong cultural characteristics, makes cultural Euroscepticism solely pertinent to right-wing parties in Switzerland (Skinner 2013, 136).

In a longitudinal analysis by Sarrasin et al. (2018), the authors investigate the rise in Euroscepticism in Switzerland and its causes. Their hypothesis state that among originally pro-EU Swiss residents, changes in personal financial circumstances (“economic factor”) and political ideology (“cultural and political factor”) may result in a fall in support for the EU (Sarrasin et al. 2018, 211-212). Employing data from the Swiss Household Panel (SHP) between 1999 and 2014, they examined their hypothesis in order to predict the unwillingness among Swiss citizens to join the EU.

The data provided by SHP respondents included information about Swiss nationals 15 years of age and older and their reluctance to join the EU, as well as both professional standing and educational achievement, the way they assess their financial standing, their political position, and their perception of political influence (Sarrasin et al. 2018, 207-208). In total, there were

75,565 observations and 14,436 respondents, averaging 5.23 observations per responder in the sample from 2009 to 2014 (Sarrasin et al. 2018, 207-208). In order to represent the Swiss geographical regions and analyze potential regional differences, the linguistic distribution of Switzerland was taken into account, i.e., 70,6% of the respondents resided in the German-speaking part, 25,77% in the French-speaking and 3,63% in the Italian-speaking cantons (Sarrasin et al. 2018, 207).

The analysis of the data provided by SHP demonstrates that Swiss residents with higher educational attainment - those with a Matura or a tertiary degree as opposed to those with just elementary education - were less likely to be Eurosceptic (Sarrasin et al.

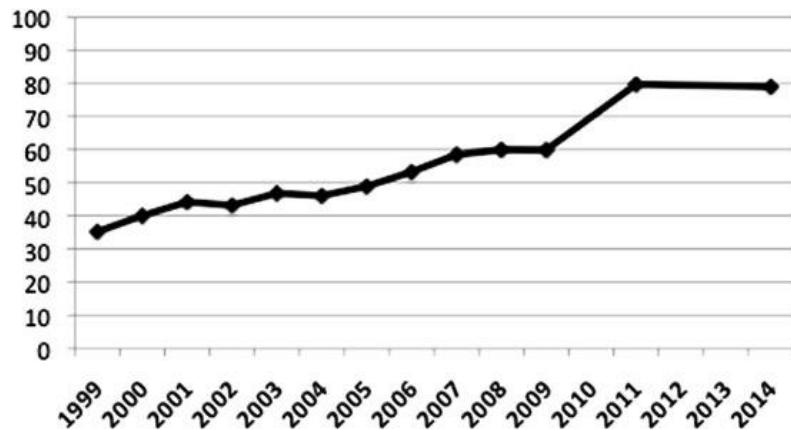


Figure 1 Share of SHP respondents (Swiss nationals, minimum age of 15), from 1999 to 2014 (missing years are interpolated), who stated they were opposed to join the EU (from Sarrasin et al. 2018, 204).

2018, 209). Moreover, respondents who expressed dissatisfaction with their financial situation were less likely to favor EU membership (Sarrasin et al. 2018, 209). Focusing on cultural and political factors, self-reported right-wing views were linked to a greater likelihood of rejecting the EU (Sarrasin et al. 2018, 209). However, respondents' opposition to the EU increased as their perception of their political power increased (Sarrasin et al. 2018, 209). This is contrary to the authors' hypothesis, as well as the findings of Abts and Baute (2021), which demonstrate that perceived powerlessness typically leads to higher Euroscepticism. Although the authors of the article utilized data gathered from the 2014 Belgian National Election Study survey and thus, analyzed a member state, it is noteworthy that the perception of powerlessness does not influence Euroscepticism in non-member states. A possible explanation for this might be that citizens of EU members feel powerless in regard to the shaping of the Union, thus leading to greater Euroscepticism. However, Swiss citizens are unaffected by this rationale because by opposing the membership of the EU, they are exercising their political right which results in the perception of greater political power.

Male and older participants indicated being more reluctant to join the EU, which is consistent with other research on Euroscepticism (Sarrasin et al. 2018, 209). While full-time workers were less inclined to be Eurosceptic, students and retirees were more likely to be. The likelihood of

opposing EU membership was higher among students and retirees than individuals with full-time employment (Sarrasin et al. 2018, 209). In addition, the probability that participants would be against joining the EU increased with the level of political interest they reported, i.e., a lesser interest in politics results in lesser Euroscepticism (Sarrasin et al. 2018, 209). Lastly, the results by Sarrasin et al. (2018, 209) revealed that respondents from the German- and Italian-speaking areas were more likely to be against EU membership than those from the French-speaking which reflects the regional distribution of the vote on the EEA agreement that will be discussed in Chapter 5.2. Therefore, the authors conclude the (hard) Euroscepticism of Swiss nationals is affected by cultural and political, as well as economic factors.

Nonetheless, additional variables attribute to the Swiss citizen's reluctance to become a member of the EU. Skinner (2013) identified a variety of factors, such as political ideology, nationalism, and economic interests that might explain the various manifestations of Euroscepticism among non-member states. In Iceland, Norway, and Switzerland, five out of the following six varieties have been identified: post-materialist, political, rural society, economic, and cultural (Skinner 2013, 136). In the article by Skinner (2013), the author estimated that the economic type is the strongest in Switzerland, followed by the political variety, rural society, and cultural factors. In general, the study shows that right-wing Eurosceptics are driven by economic and political Euroscepticism, and in certain cases rural society and cultural Euroscepticism, whereas left-leaning Eurosceptics are motivated by post-materialist, political, and rural society-based Euroscepticism (Skinner 2013, 136).

Furthermore, the phenomenon of direct democracy and the consequences of referendums and popular initiatives contribute to this, although the double majority criteria and protracted implementation procedures typically mitigate this impact in Swiss consensual decision-making (Heidbreder, Stadelmann-Steffen, Thomann & Sager 2018, 379). In Switzerland, some votes pertaining to the EU are becoming more political and polarized, especially by right-wing populist parties that energize voters based on anti-EU and anti-immigration emotions (Heidbreder et al. 2018, 379). Apart from populism typically being a problem for direct democracy itself, there are costs and benefits to involving individuals directly in democratic decision-making, including the potential for decisions to conflict with established institutions (Heidbreder et al. 2018, 380). In a study conducted by Lauener, Emmenegger, Häusermann, and Walter (2021), it became evident that voters who must choose between international cooperation and immigration restriction tended to lean to the right.

2.3 Rising Euroscepticism in Times of Crisis

In the previous sections, scholarly literature on Euroscepticism in member states, as well as in non-member states of the EU, has been presented. This part will emphasize how crises have had an impact on the degree of Euroscepticism. The EU has dealt with a number of crises over the years, including the COVID-19 pandemic, the refugee crisis, and the global financial crisis. The EU's capacity to respond to these crises has been tested, which has intensified public scrutiny and criticism of the Union. The following section will delve into how these crises have affected the emergence of Euroscepticism in member states and Switzerland.

According to Pirro and Taggart (2018), a crisis is characterized by the need to take decisive actions to address a particular issue and to reduce the ambiguity that surrounds it. Therefore, crises are deemed “transformative events”. Politicians’ choices during crises are more likely to significantly affect how the crisis turns out. The structural system of organizations and the established norms of international cooperation can alter significantly and, in some cases, irreversibly as a result of crises. On a national level, a single organization such as a populist party can be affected as well, which would cause the entire party system to be reorganized. Moreover, crises alter societal norms and patterns, the distribution of resources, and the emergence of new power structures. Events like the Great Recession, the humanitarian crisis, and Brexit are examples of situations that fit the definition of a crisis. Furthermore, their article suggests that the rise of populist and Eurosceptic parties can be seen as a response to a perceived democratic deficit in the EU, as well as a rejection of the neoliberal consensus that has dominated European politics in recent decades. The authors argue that a critical analysis of the relationship between populism and Euroscepticism is essential to develop effective strategies for addressing the challenges facing the EU and its member states. (Pirro & Taggart 2018)

Pirro & Taggart (2018) argue that crises, such as the Great Recession and the refugee crisis, have led to an increase in Eurosceptic and populist sentiment across Europe. The authors Algan, Guriev, Papaioannou, and Passari (2017) discuss two possible causes for the decline in trust in the EU: “the rise of Eurosceptic populists, and the electoral successes of radical-left and far-right parties” (310). The first cause focuses on a cultural reaction against progressive principles, while the second highlights the Great Recession, globalization, and technological advancement as causes of economic instability (Algan et al. 2017). Much of the public discussion has focused on the cultural reaction, despite the fact that these two theories do not conflict and undoubtedly

interact with one another (Algan et al. 2017). In their analysis, Algan et al. (2017) examine the economic causes of populism with a particular emphasis on the effects of the Eurozone crisis. As a result of this recession, the unemployment rate significantly increased and their findings suggest a connection between the crisis-related rise in unemployment and the decline in trust in national and European political institutions as well as the growth of populism (Algan et al. 2017, 310-311, 374-375).

As one of the developments following the Eurozone crisis from 2009 to approximately 2012, Peet and La Guardia (2014) identify the decline in the popularity of the EU. This has been particularly noticeable in Mediterranean nations like Spain and Greece, but it is also evident in France, where a lower percentage of the population supports the EU than in the historically Eurosceptic United Kingdom (Peet & La Guardia 2014, 75). The emergence of populist groups on the far-right and the far-left that are opposed to the EU, the euro, and frequently, immigration reflects this tendency (Peet & La Guardia 2014, 75). The fundamental factor for these parties' recent resurgence is their capacity to harness escalating anti-EU sentiment following the Eurozone crisis (Peet & La Guardia 2014, 75). In many instances, the emergence of populist and extreme parties has resulted in the decline of traditional parties in polls (Peet & La Guardia 2014, 75). Moreover, extremist and populist parties are also performing well in Central and Eastern Europe, proving that this tendency is not exclusive to the Eurozone nations that have been substantially affected by the crisis (Peet & La Guardia 2014, 75).

In the aforementioned longitudinal analysis by Sarasin et al. (2018), in which the authors employed a data sample from the Swiss Household Panel (SHP) between 2009 and 2014, they attempted to predict the unwillingness among Swiss citizens to join the EU. In their analysis in predicting the unwillingness among Swiss citizens to join the EU, they discovered that culture, politics, and economics play important roles in determining how Swiss individuals feel about the EU. Sarasin et al. (2018, 204) claim that while the economic crisis certainly contributed to the general decrease in Swiss citizens' endorsement of EU membership, personal life-course changes may also be an influencing element leading them to abandon their backing at a certain time in their lives. However, the authors found that shifts in sentiments about the EU were mostly unrelated to changes in an individual's life cycle. Transitions within persons cannot be linked to changes in opinions, even while economic considerations assist in clarifying individual differences in sentiments about joining the EU. This demonstrates that macro-factors, such as economic crises, may be the primary cause of the general fall in Swiss nationals'

interest in becoming a member state of the EU (Sarrasin et al. 2018, 212). Another possibility is that people do not see the (advantageous) economic effects of EU membership on their lives, which would explain why changes in their financial situations have no influence. “Overall, this is in line with the argument that the apparent divide between the losers and winners of globalization may be more cultural than utilitarian” (Sarrasin et al. 2018, 212).

In the case of Greece, Vasilopoulou (2018) examines how party Euroscepticism in Greece is affected by the economic side crisis within the EU, illustrating that both newly created parties with a pro-European agenda and Eurosceptic parties have election success. The Eurosceptic voices have become louder; however, Vasilopoulou (2018, 323) states that this might not be exclusively a result of Euroscepticism, but instead, these new Eurosceptic parties could not be connected to or held accountable for the crisis. In addition, the likelihood of winning elections caused challenger parties to soften some of their Euroscepticism (Vasilopoulou 2018).

Although the media predicted a great rise in the votes for populist Eurosceptic parties during the European Parliament elections of 2014, their premature forecast was not entirely realized (Pirro & Taggart 2018, 254). The basis for anticipating a populist ascendancy in times of crisis lay on both the ideological persuasions of these parties and the most recent decline of legitimacy that looked to impact the EU (Pirro & Taggart 2018, 254). Populist parties historically opposed the EU using a variety of reasonings and due to their propensity for benefiting from actual or perceived crises elevated them to possible winners of these specific circumstances and occurrences (Pirro & Taggart 2018, 254).

Pirro and van Kessel (2018) conclude in their case study on the Netherlands and Italy that populist parties do not always integrate crisis and Euroscepticism in a meaningful way, i.e., these actors do not immediately or automatically accuse the EU in the event of crises that clearly have a European component. However, populist Euroscepticism proved to be a consistent thread throughout both cases and all three crises, despite the fact that the creation and prioritization of frames depend on tactical decisions and contextual peculiarities (Pirro & van Kessel 2018). This might show that, from a populist standpoint, maintaining a sustained critique of the European project’s “undemocratic nature” and “failure to weather many crises” is the easiest way to weaken its legitimacy (Pirro & van Kessel 2018). Therefore, the frame of legitimacy is a potent tool for expressing populist Eurosceptic viewpoints (Pirro & van Kessel 2018).

Due to the recency of the COVID-19 crisis, the scholarly literature on the effect of the pandemic on nationwide elections, Euroscepticism, and populism has been very limited in size and scope. Pirro and Taggart (2021) present the state of populist parties in Europe prior to the COVID-19 pandemic with an emphasis on their philosophy, Euroscepticism, electoral success, and involvement in politics. Their survey includes 63 parties from 30 different European nations, including Norway, Switzerland, and the United Kingdom (Pirro & Taggart 2021, 283). At its conclusion, the article describes the many sorts of perspectives on European integration, ranging from soft or hard Euroscepticism to the absence of it, and explores the ramifications of their membership (if applicable) in the European Parliament (Pirro & Taggart 2021). In this article, the Swiss People's Party (SVP) is classified as a radical right party with hard Euroscepticism (Pirro & Taggart 2021, 287). During the last parliament elections, the SVP received 25.6% of the vote, which was considered a setback, because the vote share had decreased from the 2015 election (29.4%) – which counts as the highest nationwide voter share ever received since the establishment of proportional representation in 1919 (Pirro & Taggart 2021, 303; Lutz 2016, 1). This would be a fruitful area for further work since Pirro and Taggart (2021) have collected data from 63 parties from 30 different European nations. In the case of Switzerland, the next parliamentary elections are taking place in October 2023. A further study could assess the long-term effects of the pandemic on the strength of populist parties and Euroscepticism.

3 Theoretical Framework

3.1 Framing

This study defines framing as a strategy of choosing and emphasizing perceived features (cf. Coutto 2021, 696). A specific sequence of thought aspects is given coherence through frames and thus, functioning as an essential structuring notion (Hänggli & Kriesi 2010, 142). A frame serves as a focus that draws the interest in particular elements of an issue while deflecting it from other elements, similar to how a frame surrounds a picture and sets it apart from what is around it (Hänggli & Kriesi 2010, 142). A frame might be also defined as selectively emphasizing specific elements of a “perceived reality” and making them more pertinent in speech or text, e.g., in order to enhance a specific meaning or moral judgment (Hänggli & Kriesi 2010, 142). Therefore, in other terms, framing is to deliberately build the interpretation of reality (Hänggli & Kriesi 2010, 142). While there are few guidelines in regard to strategic framing, there are several possibilities to employ it (Hänggli & Kriesi 2010, 142).

Hänggli and Kriesi (2010, 142-143) suggest that political actors have three strategic options regarding framing: The first choice is to select one or more substantive frames capable of drawing media and public attention away from the causes of their rivals and onto their own; the authors call this “substantive focus choice”. Following this, political actors must choose whether to employ their opponents' frames either offensively or defensively and how much emphasis to give to their opponents' substantive frames in comparison to their own; also known as the “oppositional focus option”. Lastly, they must determine the relative importance of their own substantive frames in comparison to the campaign for the referendum - the “contest emphasis option”.

Thus far, there are two factors that affect the strength of a certain frame, i.e., “the credibility of its source and its congruence with central cultural themes” (Hänggli & Kriesi 2010, 143). In the study by Hänggli and Kriesi (2010, 154), it became evident that political players' contributions to Swiss direct-democratic initiatives are crucial because they are the ones who propose the most significant frames into the public debate and who refute the reasoning of their opponents. Therefore, the Swiss direct-democratic campaign is a battle of substantive framing, a conflict of ideas that enables the electorate to assess the merits of various problem framings at the end (Hänggli & Kriesi 2010, 156).

De Vreese (2007) concluded that media coverage plays a significant role in shaping public opinion about the EU and calls for more balanced reporting to counteract the spiral of Euroscepticism. This was supported by a study conducted by Galpin and Trenz (2018, 148) who examined the degree to which news coverage of the EU exhibits a systematic negative bias by contrasting Germany and the United Kingdom. As a news value, negativity focuses on political gaffes, debates, scandals, or crises that jeopardize public confidence in democratic politics and its representatives (Galpin & Trenz 2018, 148). This study hypothesizes that the same holds for political campaigns.

3.2 Crisis as a Variant and Eurosceptic Frames

According to Pirro and Taggart (2018), the idea of a crisis is conceptually associated with having to take stark actions. These actions signify a change in the distinct situation and ultimately pose an attempt at clearing the uncertainty that is closely associated with crises. Therefore, crises can be generally defined as brief windows of time that are coined by their significantly increased likelihood that politicians' decisions will influence the result of interest (Pirro & Taggart 2018). Crises may result in distinct (potentially irreversible) shifts in institutional contexts (e.g., systems for economic or humanitarian policy mechanisms, as well as a restructuring of established norms of international cooperation as was the case for Brexit), as well as impacting the discourses of populist parties, thereby appearing within specific organizations which may result in the reorganization of the entire party systems (Pirro & Taggart 2018). Due to their disruption, societal norms and patterns would alter, resources would be distributed differently, and new power structures would arise. The requirement of being acknowledged as such by modern players is categorically satisfied by events like the Great Recession, the migration crisis, or Brexit. Nevertheless, crises may lead populist parties to employ Eurosceptic frames, thus making their Euroscepticism contextual and temporary. This hypothesis deals with Euroscepticism as a response to crises like the Eurozone crisis and the humanitarian crisis, grounded on the idea that populist parties prosper in these contexts. (Pirro & Taggart 2018)

For evaluating changes in the framing of populist parties, Pirro and Taggart (2018) developed a framework for analysis that focuses on what populist parties argue and how they behave, i.e., the “supply side” of populist Eurosceptic politics, as they define it. Firstly, the framework determines whether and how these crises have altered the ideological form of Euroscepticism (the “inward” aspect). Secondly, the role of crises is reintroduced in the positions of populist

Eurosceptic actors (the “functional” aspect). Lastly, the effect of these discourses is identified, i.e., whether and how these topics resonated across the political party system and which implications in the larger political process can be assessed. (Pirro & Taggart 2018)

There are four crucial factors (“dimensions”) that have been identified for grasping populists’ interactions with the EU: **populism, Euroscepticism, crisis, and impact** which are all hypothetically interconnected. Therefore, the authors differentiate between three ideas, i.e., Euroscepticism, populism, and crisis, as well as the dynamic process, i.e., the impact. (Pirro & Taggart 2018)

This four-step model entails that each component builds on each other:

“(1) identify populist parties; (2) elaborate on the nature and possible evolution of their Eurosceptic agenda (e.g. from soft to hard Euroscepticism, and vice versa), as well as the themes (i.e. cultural, economic, etc.) deployed across relevant periods; (3) identify relevant crises and qualify their role in terms of the Eurosceptic trajectory of populist parties (i.e. positioning, salience, and contents); and (4) ascertain whether populist Eurosceptic parties were able to trigger competition on ‘Europe’ with their mainstream rivals, and examine the responses elaborated by the latter.” (Pirro & Taggart 2018, 260)

In their study, Pirro and van Kessel (2018) examine how populist parties in Italy and the Netherlands have evolved their Euroscepticism in response to various crises that have troubled the European Union over the past ten years, such as the financial and economic crisis, the influx of immigrants and asylum seekers, and Brexit. The study explores two nations with typically “Europhile” settings but varying degrees of susceptibility to these crises to empirically analyze the effects of these frameworks on each party system (Pirro & van Kessel 2018). Since populist movements have been linked to actual or perceived crises, they have also been referred to as “movements of crisis” (Pirro & van Kessel 2018, 327).

The study develops four populist Eurosceptic frames: **socioeconomic, cultural, sovereignty, and legitimacy** (Pirro & van Kessel 2018, 327). Frames on the economy, fiscal sovereignty, banks, bailouts, national debt, and the Euro are all included in the socioeconomic component. The cultural frame includes immigration, multiculturalism, religion (including Islam and Christianity), and security. The sovereignty frame addresses challenges with delocalization, decision-making transfer, and centralization. Lastly, the democratic deficit, competence, effectiveness, and corruption comprise the legitimacy frame (Pirro & van Kessel 2018).

However, these frames are not always in conflict with one another (Pirro & van Kessel 2018, 3); an argument such as the state's capacity of employing an independent monetary policy may be discussed which touches upon the socioeconomic and sovereignty frame. Moreover, following the frame categorization, the authors analyzed qualitatively the prominence of each frame in relation to each crisis to measure the impact of the crisis (Pirro & van Kessel 2018, 4).

In journalism studies, prominence refers to the level of significance that journalists and/or editors place on something (Boukes, Jones & Vliegthart 2022, 99). The benefit of analyzing prominence is that it makes “transparent and objective” evaluation possible, which is nearly unattainable with the original gatekeeping mechanisms of story selection in journalism (Boukes et al. 2022, 100). Prominence may be employed as a function of both the length and the placement of the story in the news outlet, i.e., a story may be the longest piece or placed on the front page in relation to others (Boukes et al. 2022, 100).

The idea of prominence, as defined in journalism studies, proves to be a useful analytical tool within the context of Eurosceptic discourse contained in party programs or an *argumentarium* (cf. the findings of the paper by Pirro and van Kessel 2018). Therefore, this thesis will employ the concept of frame prominence in order to assess the weight given to Eurosceptic arguments within these political documents.

4 Methodology

Political discourse has historically been seen as the most effective way to convince, and inspire electorates and thus, assert political power (Klebanov, Diermeier & Beigman 2009, 448). Focusing on the social and political background of text and speaking is part of the methodological approach (Lupton 1992, 145). The main target of discourse analysis is a critical inspection of how language is utilized and how dominant ideologies (i.e., belief systems) are reproduced through such discourse, i.e., textual and verbal communications (Lupton 1992, 145). Understanding the connection between language and ideology requires both a linguistic and a discourse analysis perspective (Lupton 1992, 145). Discourse analysis examines how ideas of reality are planted in textual elements including grammar, style, and rhetorical techniques (Lupton 1992, 145). In recent years, several more ways to study political speech have been added, many of them impacted by psychology, as seen in the substantial literature on the framing effect (Klebanov et al. 2009, 448).

Therefore, discourse analysis will be defined in this paper as an effort to identify a certain language pattern that appears in conversations or arguments (cf. Raymond & Olive 2009, 191). In this sense, discourse is a distinct ensemble of ideas, conceptions, and categorizations through which meaning is assigned to physical and social reality (Raymond & Olive 2009, 191). As a result, discourse encompasses more than rhetoric (Raymond & Olive 2009, 191).

The four populist Eurosceptic frames defined by Pirro and van Kessel (2018, 327) are used as the analytical framework in the approach of this thesis, i.e. socioeconomic, cultural, sovereignty, and legitimacy – as presented in the previous chapter. The purpose of this thesis is to ascertain if these frames apply to the discourse by SVP and to assess how these frames have developed as a result of the European refugee crisis. A crucial element to determine the impact of a crisis requires the idea of frame prominence. The term “frame prominence” describes the degree of visibility and saliency that a certain frame has in the party discourse. Applying the idea of frame prominence offers a useful framework for examination in the context of Eurosceptic discourse inside the party programs or an *argumentarium*. It allows for the measurement of the evolution of the Eurosceptic frames over the years and how the refugee crisis affects the prominence of certain arguments.

To do this, the study will take a qualitative method that entails analyzing pertinent writings and materials that are linked to SVP’s Euroscepticism. This includes the party programs of 2011-

2015, 2015-2019, and 2019-2023, as well as the “*argumentarium*” to relevant popular initiative published by the SVP in 2014 and 2020 respectively. An *argumentarium* includes the arguments of a certain party which presents arguments to the reader in order to encourage them to vote in line with the party. All of these are either available on the party’s website in German, French, and Italian or made available at request.¹

The study focuses on analyzing the period before, during, and after a crisis to assess the evolution of the frames of Euroscepticism. A valuable data source for understanding Eurosceptic frames prior to the crisis is the SVP party program from 2011 to 2015. The thesis will discuss pertinent areas of the party platform that deal with national sovereignty, European integration, and related topics such as the restriction of the freedom of movement for EU citizens.

Two main sources will be examined in order to evaluate how the crisis has affected Eurosceptic frames: Firstly, the popular initiative “Against Mass Immigration” of 2014 will be examined in order to identify the frames and justifications by the SVP. Secondly, the party program from 2015 to 2019 offers a revised understanding of the SVP’s Eurosceptic stance, reflecting the period’s changing political climate and new challenges.

Following the European refugee crisis, the party program of 2019 to 2023 will be analyzed to assess the effect the crisis had. To complement this, the popular initiative “For Moderate Immigration (Limitation Initiative)” from 2020 aims to rightfully implement the adopted popular initiative from 2014. Therefore, it serves as an example that is appropriate for assessing the comparison in frames.

In this study, the interpretative approach will be employed to analyze Eurosceptic patterns in these campaigns. The analysis will involve a critical examination of how language is used and how dominant ideologies are reproduced through discourse, including the identification of linguistic and rhetorical techniques used to convey Eurosceptic ideas. The results will be presented clearly and concisely, using examples from the data to illustrate the identified Eurosceptic patterns. However, in order to find Eurosceptic patterns, only campaigns will be taken into account, which aim to change Swiss relations with the EU. The SVP-led popular initiatives “Against Mass Immigration” in 2014 and “For Moderate Immigration” in 2020 pose such examples as they attempt to restrict the freedom of movement and thus, potentially leading

¹ An exception is the *argumentarium* for the popular initiative “For Moderate Immigration (Limitation Initiative)” for which the SVP has formed a specific committee with a dedicated website.

to the termination of all bilateral agreements. This “guillotine clause” will be explained in the following chapters.

Overall, the research paper will aim to provide a comprehensive analysis of the Eurosceptic frames in the SVP's discourse and their significance in the Swiss political context. Therefore, the thesis will present the voting behavior in the parliamentary elections and popular initiatives to assess the resonance of Eurosceptic sentiment in the electorate.

The study's design and data-gathering techniques include some possible biases and limitations that need to be taken into account. Firstly, the study solely concentrates on the SVP's rhetoric, which may not be reflective of all Eurosceptic rhetoric in Switzerland. This restricts the findings' applicability to other political circumstances or parties. Secondly, the technique used to acquire the data primarily depends on the information found on the SVP website, which could not be an accurate representation of the party's or Switzerland's overall Eurosceptic discourse. Other discourse formats, such as public speeches, interviews, or social media posts, could exist. Most notably, the campaign posters by the SVP regarding the popular initiative “Against Mass Migration” will not be analyzed. However, Wintzer and Hirsing (2018) covered this extensively in their chapter “The Foreign in the Linguistic Landscape: The Posters of the Swiss People's Party and their discursive processing”. Thirdly, the subjective character of the qualitative analysis is another possible source of bias in the study. The researcher's own biases and prejudices might affect how language patterns and speech are interpreted, resulting in subjective interpretations of the data. To counter this, the study will employ a strict methodology and explicitly state the standards for spotting Eurosceptic discourse tendencies. Lastly, the study may have problems extrapolating its results outside of the Swiss environment. The findings' applicability to other nations or political environments may be constrained by Switzerland's unique historical and political context as well as the SVP's unique features.

5 Background

5.1 Swiss People's Party (*Schweizerische Volkspartei*, SVP)

In order to illustrate the contemporary political agenda of the Swiss People's Party, this chapter seeks to showcase the changes the party has undergone over the course of time.

The SVP was established in 1971, but not for populist reasons. Instead, throughout the first twenty years of its existence, the party worked as a patronage organization that was primarily concerned with getting agricultural subsidies (Hildebrand 2017, 19). The SVP evolved into a “catch-all party” in the 1990s as a result of the increasing influence of the party fraction in Zurich headed by Christoph Blocher (Hildebrand 2017, 19–20). The 1992 referendum to join the European Economic Area (EEA) was essential in the SVP becoming Switzerland's dominant political force (Hildebrand 2017, 202, 206).

The SVP has been internally split among supporters and opponents of European Economic Area (EEA) membership in the early phases of the election. The fraction of the party in Zurich, led by Christoph Blocher, was the principal opponent of it (Hildebrand 201, 201). By traveling across Switzerland, financing newspaper advertisements, and actively advocating against the vote, he rose to become the leader of the opposition (Hildebrand 2017, 201). Blocher successfully persuaded his fellow party members to support his cause during the party congress, making SVP the sole party to oppose the EEA membership vote (Hildebrand 2017, 201–202).

According to the story Blocher created, this election was about “adaption or resistance” (Hildebrand 2017, 216). This invented narrative claims that immigration, security, and European affairs are all manifestations of political class conformism (Hildebrand 2017, 212). Blocher argued that Switzerland's participation in the European Community (EC) was a disadvantage for Switzerland in terms of its economy, politics, and culture in a speech titled “*Albisgüetlirede*” in 1992. He also advocated for opposition against the political elite and “their conformism” (Hildebrand 2017, 216). Blocher equates the EC treaty to a colonial agreement in the speech and claims that it results in a loss of sovereignty, self-determination, and democratic rights (Hildebrand 2017, 216).

The idea of loss of sovereignty and self-determination may be explained with the narrative of “foreign judges” and “foreign laws” which was also adopted in this context. Those or groups who respect national sovereignty and see foreign influence as an issue embrace this narrative,

which casts doubt on the validity of foreign judges or laws in a local legal system. The question arises when it is disputed whether local courts should consider international precedents or if legal matters should be determined by international courts. Foreign courts and laws have both supporters and detractors. On the one hand, they might provide important perspectives and ideas that may not be available in a strictly home context. On the other, they can endanger national sovereignty and undermine local legal systems. This subject reflects broader arguments concerning the function of global institutions and the connection between national sovereignty and global collaboration. regard to the vote on the EEA membership, accepting membership would lead to having a superior judicative body.²

The EEA referendum was initially predicted to be successful, but opponents were able to mobilize voters, and on December 6, 1992, a large turnout of 78% of the electorate voted against EEA membership by a slim majority of 50.3% (Hildebrand 2017, 202). Since that time, bilateral sectoral accords have controlled Switzerland's ties with the EU (Federal Department of Foreign Affairs (FDFA) 2014).

The repercussions of this were essentially nonexistent. The anticipated negative effects of the failure of European integration did not materialize, and Switzerland managed to survive economically and politically (Hildebrand 2017, 286). Contrary to projections made in the 1990s, even left-liberal scholars had to concede that the country had an odd revival in the early 21st century (Hildebrand 2017, 286). Contrary to expectations, and even against the sentimental identity of the people of Switzerland, which had been damaged in the late 1990s by the debate over Switzerland's role in World War II and further harmed in 2001 by the bankruptcy of Swissair (the symbol of the contemporary national economy), the sentimental identity of the people with Switzerland was restored (Hildebrand 2017, 286).

Since then, SVP has improved ideological coherence while also modernizing its structure to boost productivity and centralization (Favero 2021, 254). Therefore, it has been suggested that the party had created a successful political program in the 1990s that successfully balanced nationalism and “traditional values” with market-friendly economic and budgetary goals (Favero 2021, 254). Moreover, SVP also portrayed itself as the sole adversary of the political

² In the case of Switzerland, there have been repeatedly national debates about this issue. In 2018, the federal popular initiative “Swiss Law instead of Foreign Judges”, also referred to as the “Self-Determination Initiative” was put to vote. The initiative aimed to codify and adopt the supremacy of the Swiss Federal Constitution over international law. The “Self-Determination Initiative” was launched by the SVP. However, the majority of the electorate and the cantons rejected it.

establishment which supposedly consists of all other political parties, irrespective of ideological agenda (Favero 2021, 254).

Immigration concerns become a bigger feature of the SVP's platform over time (Sion 2004, 358). SVP introduced nativism to a newly adopted populist platform as the party added immigration, asylum-seeking, and European integration to its political agenda (Favero 2021, 254). An illustration of this occurred when Christoph Blocher was elected as the Federal Council's minister of justice and said that the nation's history, culture, and future were its three main priorities (Sion 2004, 358). The SVP's top priorities were to enact a stricter asylum policy and make the citizenship application procedure far more challenging (Sion 2004, 358). Despite opposition from all other political parties, the SVP supported a referendum in 2002 that would have made it practically impossible for asylum seekers to enter the country by land (Jupp 2015, 67). This plan was narrowly defeated by the electorate (Jupp 2015, 67).

The SVP has taken a position that is anti-Muslim in addition to being anti-immigrant and anti-European. The party has developed a number of defenses for its position throughout the time. For instance, the SVP asserts that Muslims pose a danger to the Swiss identity and that "Muslim immigrants are particularly incapable of integrating into Swiss society and their presence should be considered an obstacle to achieving immigrant integration in Switzerland" (cf. Cheng 2015, 570). The Swiss electorate approved both of their popular initiatives to ban the construction of minarets in 2009 and the wearing of veils in 2021 (Eidgenössisches Justiz- und Polizeidepartement (EJDP) 2021; Albertazzi & Mueller 2013, 362).

The SVP, according to Hartleb (2011, 341), is a "borderline case" and may be characterized as a conservative party. But over time, SVP has adopted more populist language and opportunistic viewpoints. For instance, in campaigns and speeches, immigrants are frequently demonized as threats to the nation's economy, culture, and security (Green et al. 2016, 465). According to the SVP, Eastern European immigrants take jobs from the Swiss populace and are more likely to commit crimes (Green et al. 2016, 465). Additionally, the party positions itself as being opposed to the political elite, despite the fact that as a result of its electoral success, it now belongs to that elite (Steppacher 2016, 120).

To summarize, the SVP operated as a patronage party with a focus on obtaining agricultural subsidies throughout the first 20 years of its existence. Nonetheless, in 1992, with Blocher's

ascent within the SVP, the EEA membership campaign's electoral success, and the party's stern stance against the conformism of the political establishment, the party won a significant number of seats. SVP has backed anti-immigrant, anti-Muslim, and anti-European agendas ever since.

5.2 The Relation between Switzerland and the European Union

Since 1990, there were various popular initiatives and referenda which were crucial in the relations between Switzerland and the European Union (EU). Most notably, the bilateral ties between Switzerland and the EU began in 1992, after the rejection of the EEA agreement. With historically exceptional high voting participation of over 70%, Swiss voters rejected the European Economic Area (EEA) treaty on December 6th with a slim majority of 50.3% of the vote and 18 out of 26 cantons (Jenni 2016, 11). In the 1990s, the nation had gone five years with economic development that was below the average of the other member states of the European Community (EC), a circumstance that supposedly makes regional integration more appealing (Jenni 2016, 2). However, the political and administrative elite were taken aback by this result, particularly because the government had submitted a membership application to the EU a few months before the vote (Jenni 2016, 11). The political and economic elites were overwhelmingly in favor of entering the EEA, garnering 67% of the vote in Parliament, while the populist right-wing Swiss People's Party (SVP) spearheaded the opposition (Sarrasin et al. 2018, 203). Higher educated or wealthier Swiss nationals were more likely to support the EEA (Sarrasin et al. 2018, 203). Moreover, strong regional differences existed, with pro-EEA voters predominating among the French-speaking Swiss: all French-speaking cantons approved the EEA with approval ratings as high as 79%, while Ticino and nearly all German-speaking cantons opposed it (Sarrasin et al. 2018, 203).

Since then, Switzerland's political controversy has been the issue of European integration – because the referendum on the EEA exposed the disagreement between the pro-European political elite and the Eurosceptic people, as well as a linguistic and urban-rural divide in the electorate (Jenni 2016, 2). Moreover, the Swiss People's Party (SVP) successfully mobilized these divisions, which were evident in subsequent votes on European matters. This led to the development of the SVP from being a minor participant to becoming the nation's strongest party today (Jenni 2016, 2).

This bilateral strategy evolved starting in the second half of the 1990s and was characterized by difficult negotiations and frequent public votes (Mazzoleni & Dardalleni 2021, 2). A set of

seven agreements known as “Bilaterals I” was agreed upon in 1999 and came into effect in 2002 after extensive talks concerning the topics to be covered and the agreements' content (Jenni 2016, 11). The “Bilaterals I” include the free choice of residence and the immigration of EU citizens to Switzerland (Schwok 2021, 41). Due to the political and legal nature of these accords, this represented a shift to active engagement in the European integration process – instead of the previous passive policy towards the EU (Jenni 2016, 11).

In 2000, the electorate accepted the “Bilaterals I” with a 67.2% majority (Schwok 2021, 42). In contrast to the EEA agreement, the bilateral agreements better maintained Switzerland's formal sovereignty, thus satisfying the parts of the electorate who feared the loss of sovereignty (Schwok 2021, 42). Furthermore, there are no supranational components in the bilateral agreements, such as the European Surveillance Authority or Court of Justice of the European Union monitoring and the “Bilateral I” do not guarantee the automatic application of future EU regulations (Schwok 2021, 42). It is also apparent that fewer people opposed the Bilateral Agreements I as a result of Christoph Blocher, the SVP, and the Campaign for an Independent and Neutral Switzerland (AUNS) choosing not to oppose them (Schwok 2021, 42).

The negotiations for the Bilaterals II commenced before the Bilaterals I package took effect and was signed in 2004 (Jenni 2016, 11). This included the Schengen/Dublin Agreement which eliminated border checks on people and the prohibition of applying for asylum in Switzerland if one had already done so in another member state of the agreement (Schwok 2021, 45). During the referendum in 2005, the SVP and AUNS led an extraordinarily aggressive campaign against the Schengen/Dublin Agreement, and their arguments focused on Switzerland's loss of sovereignty, the elimination of border controls, a foreign invasion, the unfettered admission of criminals, and submission to foreign courts (Schwok 2021, 46). Nonetheless, a 54.6% majority of voters supported the agreements on the ballot on June 5th, 2005 (Schwok 2021, 46). Lastly, the Bilateral Agreements II became effective in 2008 (Jenni 2016, 11).

As more countries joined the EU accepted, referendums were held in Switzerland about the extension of the bilateral agreements to the newest member states, which were all approved by the electorate (Schwok 2021, 42-43). The SVP decided to employ popular initiatives when its plan to stage referendums against accords or laws did not succeed (Schwok 2021, 43). This led to the party launching the popular campaign against “mass immigration” in 2014, which posed a danger to the package of bilateral agreements as a whole, and was successful (Schwok 2021,

38). Therefore, the party has successfully undermined the free movement of people inside the EU with a proposal on “stopping mass immigration”, even if its plan was approved by the general public on February 9th of that year, albeit with a very slim majority of 50.3% (Schwok 2021, 43). According to this idea, the federal government must implement the national preference principle and impose yearly restrictions on the number of residency rights granted to foreign nationals (Schwok 2021, 44). As only EU (and EFTA) individuals hadn't previously been subject to restrictions and the national preference principle, the SVP deceitfully misled the public into believing that the initiative's text only applied to non-European immigrants (Schwok 2021, 44). However, this was not the case (Schwok 2021, 44).

With this decision, the EU and Switzerland's bilateral ties suffered a serious political setback (Schwok 2021, 44). It required almost three years to find a solution to this problem: Although the Bilaterals legally forbid Switzerland to impose immigration quotas or a national preference rule on citizens of EU nations, the newly adopted constitutional article on mass immigration had to be implemented (Schwok 2021, 44). Yet, given that the procedures put in place do not implement the concept of national preference or set any immigration quotas, this piece of legislation is little more than the surface (Schwok 2021, 44). In practice, firms are required to give Swiss residents' resumes priority consideration when hiring, but the government does not obligate employers to do so (Schwok 2021, 44). Furthermore, this only applies when there is a high rate of unemployment within a particular sector or location (Schwok 2021, 44).

The SVP was unsatisfied with this implementation and thus, launched another popular initiative named “For Moderate Immigration” which was voted on in September 2020 (Schwok 2021, 46). It expressly urged an immediate suspension of the bilateral agreement on the free movement of people, in contrast to the prior initiative (Schwok 2021, 47). Since this would have violated the bilateral agreements with the EU, it would invoke the “guillotine clause”, which states that the termination of one agreement results in the termination of all subsequent agreements. A new Article 121b of the Federal Constitution would have been added if this new SVP proposal had been accepted (Schwok 2021, 47). According to it, Switzerland may not sign new international treaties which allowed for the free movement of foreign nationals. However, this initiative was rejected by 61.7% of the Swiss electorate (Schwok 2021, 47).

A few days before the United Kingdom decided to leave the European Union (“Brexit”) in 2016, a year after Iceland withdrew its application to the EU, Switzerland had formally

withdrawn its application as well, which was issued in 1992 (Sarrasin et al. 2018, 204). This is considered by Sarrasin et al. (2018, 204) as the last stage of the continuous decrease in Swiss citizens' desire to join the EU. Switzerland has chosen to pursue an “*Alleingang*” policy, which involves remaining outside the EU while retaining close economic links with its members, as opposed to full membership in the EU (Sarrasin et al. 2018, 204). These bilateral agreements, which are quite similar to the EEA treaty, represent the “middle way” approach Switzerland has chosen (Sarrasin et al. 2018, 204).

The approval of an Institutional Framework Agreement (IFA), which would consolidate the current agreements and serve as a framework for all future ones, is the last stage in these bilateral ties, which have been ongoing since 2018 (Mazzoleni & Dardalleni 2021, 2). Ratification of this agreement is contingent upon approval by the Swiss people and the cantons, as it was with its precedents. In Switzerland, constitutionally significant popular votes must receive a double majority of both the general electorate and the cantonal electorate, i.e., a majority of the cantons approve the legislation at vote (Mazzoleni & Dardalleni 2021, 2). The most recent of these public votes, which took place on September 27, 2020, was a motion to suspend the free movement of people inside the EU and was rejected by the electorate (Mazzoleni & Dardalleni 2021, 2). Because of the Swiss government's unwillingness to sign an IFA that its diplomats have been negotiating for years, ties between the EU and Switzerland are now at a standstill (Schwok 2021, 38).

5.3 Direct Democracy: A Populist Tool?

The electorate in Switzerland has the ability to vote on constitutional issues due to the country's distinctive direct democracy system. As a result, both the people and the cantons have sovereignty (Albertazzi & Mueller 2013, 363). Therefore, it is intended for the citizens and the cantons to determine whether the federal constitutional law is legitimate, and Switzerland's judicial, parliamentary, or executive branches lack the power to do so (Albertazzi & Mueller 2013, 363). Furthermore, the constitution includes the right to a referendum and initiative as a democratic check on political consensus (Hildebrand 2017, 159). Historically, direct democracy has been viewed as an addition to Swiss politics rather than its core (Hildebrand 2017, 159). However, the SVP has discovered that direct democracy, rather than government intervention, is the most efficient method to advance its policy in recent years (Albertazzi & Mueller 2013, 362). To address the issue of “foreigners” and “non-Swiss” identities and customs, the party has supported a number of popular initiatives (which can recommend

changes to the constitution) and referendums (which can reject federal laws) (Albertazzi & Mueller 2013, 362).

To highlight its anti-establishment position and further the party's primary agenda, the SVP launched several popular initiatives (Favero 2021, 254). The SVP aims to gain legitimacy in its political agenda through the people's vote by utilizing and ultimately, maximizing the democratic method of popular initiatives. An example of such an effort occurred in 2009, when the SVP collected enough signatures to launch a popular initiative to forbid the construction of minarets throughout Switzerland, or in 2021 when it sought to ban the wearing of veils (Favero 2021, 254). The party's strategy of fostering "*symbolic nativism and traditional Swiss values*" was in line with the minaret and veil debate (Favero 2021, 254). The institutionalization of Islamophobia in Switzerland demonstrates how the instruments of direct democracy, notably federal popular initiatives, were used to racialize Muslim communities (Eskandari & Banfi 2017, 65). Thus far, the SVP has been portraying the Muslim minority within Switzerland as uncivilized, violent, and oppressive within itself. In addition, this minority is perceived as a threat and their existence is depicted as a potential invasion (Eskandari & Banfi 2017, 65).

In 2010, the SVP successfully collected 210'919 valid signatures³ within the required timeframe (overshooting the necessary minimum of 100'000 signatures), in order to launch a popular initiative that would assure that foreign nationals would be deported instantaneously if found guilty of certain extremely serious and less serious offenses (Albertazzi & Mueller 2013, 362). Although the federal government, most major political parties, and the general public pushed voters to reject this, the proposal was accepted with a 52.9% majority⁴, thus strengthening the SVP's assertion that it was the sole party speaking on behalf of "the people" (Albertazzi & Mueller 2013, 363).

However, the SVP asserted that the "will of the people" has not been "rightfully implemented" as it had been envisioned by the popular initiative (Eicker & Meier 2016, 113), despite the fact that some aspects of this initiative had been embraced (cf. Fedlex 2015). Consequently, the party once again began collecting signatures to create another popular initiative titled "the enforcement initiative" in order to adopt its own ideal regarding the way the deportation program should be legally carried out (Eicker & Meier 2016, 131). Instead of participating in

³ <https://swissvotes.ch/vote/552.10>

⁴ <https://swissvotes.ch/vote/552.10>

the optional referendum against the execution, the party chose to directly codify its interpretation of the deportation legislation in the Constitution (through the means of a popular initiative) (Eicker & Meier 2016, 131). The parliament would not have been able to approve the implementing laws if the popular proposal had been chosen (Eicker & Meier 2016, 131). The SVP would have bypassed the parliament in this way (Eicker & Meier 2016, 131). However, the electorate ultimately rejected this initiative, thus making it one of the few SVP-launched initiatives that have failed (Eicker & Meier 2016, 131).

Another SVP-led failed popular initiative is the “self-determination initiative” (Eidgenössisches Justiz- und Polizeidepartement (EJDP) 2018) would have established Swiss constitutional law as preeminent above international law. The self-determination initiative called for the cancellation of treaties if a precedent popular initiative, whose text is enshrined in the Swiss constitution, conflicts with it (EJDP 2018). Up until this point, Switzerland had always treated such a conflicting legal situation pragmatically, i.e., fulfilling the will of the electorate without immediately disregarding international law or having to renounce foreign policy commitments (EJDP 2018). In the event that the proposal had been accepted, Switzerland would have been forced to renegotiate all pertinent treaties and get approval for an adjustment from the pertinent negotiating partners or cancel the treaty, “if required” (EJDP 2018).

This has the effect of making every decision democratically legitimate. Nevertheless, there are drawbacks to this. For instance, research by Hainmueller and Hangartner (2019) shows that the rate of naturalization rose by almost 60% in Switzerland if politicians began voting on citizenship applications rather than the electorate. This is because council members are obligated to formally refute denials, and as a result, they may be subject to court review. Voters may, however, unilaterally and anonymously reject qualified applications based on prejudice (Hainmueller & Hangartner 2019, 530). According to this, regions with higher levels of xenophobia or judicial scrutiny, as well as immigrant groups who are more marginalized, experience a significantly greater increase in naturalization rates as a result of the switch from direct to representative democracy (Hainmueller & Hangartner 2019, 530). When compared to immigrants from the former Yugoslavia and Turkey, the anti-immigrant attitude is significantly lower for immigrants from Southern European countries, such as Spain, Italy, and Portugal (Hainmueller & Hangartner 2019, 534).

Through a particular focus on populist parties' enduring voter support across Europe and the growing opportunities they have acquired to achieve political power in recent history, the question of whether populism and democracy are compatible is revisited (Albertazzi & Mueller 2013, 343). In this way, the SVP uses direct democracy as a tactic to support its agenda with measures that are against Swiss law and international law. It is in the sovereign's hands, or in the case of Switzerland, the electorate. In conclusion, the SVP was successful in advancing its own agenda through referendums and initiatives during the 1990s and 2000s by utilizing the democratic components of the Swiss political system (Favero 2021, 254). Direct democracy has not been compromised by the SVP as part of its populist program. They have instead employed it as a tool to advance their cause. In its most effective form, direct democracy offers a strong opportunity framework through which populists can occasionally implement their political agenda (Albertazzi & Mueller 2013, 365).

5.4 The European Refugee Crisis

A record number of refugees from war-torn nations, such as Syria, Afghanistan, and Iraq, entered the European Union (EU) across the Mediterranean Sea in the early months of 2015 (Downes, Loveless & Lam 2021, 1103). Most of these refugees were hosted by nations in southern Europe, especially Greece and Italy (Downes et al. 2021, 1103). More than a million individuals attempted to flee war-torn Syria and other Middle Eastern countries in 2015 by looking for asylum in Europe (Bruneau, Kteily & Laustsen 2018, 645; Downes et al. 2021, 1103). These refugees were transported over the Mediterranean from Turkey and North Africa, predominantly to Greece, via boats that were frequently overloaded (Bruneau et al. 2018, 645). Human traffickers were frequently paid by migrants and refugees to transport them to a European island or simply to place them on a boat off the coast of Africa so that another ship could collect them and rescue them (Nedergaard 2019, 81). To increase their earnings, smugglers frequently used dangerously packed vessels with little gasoline available (Nedergaard 2019, 81). Most migrants and refugees paid the traffickers between €300 and €6000 for each person (Nedergaard 2019, 81).

Three primary routes to Europe existed in 2015 and 2016: the “Central Mediterranean Route”, the “Eastern Mediterranean Route by Land”, and the “Eastern Mediterranean Route by Sea” (Peters, Engelen & Cassimon 2023, 6). The latter two routes required entry to Greece or Bulgaria from Turkey, while the Central Mediterranean Route had to be undertaken from North Africa to Italy or Malta (Peters et al. 2023, 6-7). The Central Mediterranean Route was longer

than the other two, but Italy remained a preferable destination over Greece, since migrants arriving in Greece had to go cross the Western Balkans to reach countries like Germany (Peters et al. 2023, 6-7). Nonetheless, due to the declining political and security situation in Libya (from which the Central Mediterranean Route starts), as well as the deplorable circumstances in transit countries and the notion that the Eastern Mediterranean Route was comparatively safer, Syrians began to avoid this route in 2015 (Peters et al. 2023, 7). The Eastern Mediterranean Route by Sea was more well-traveled than the Eastern Mediterranean Route by Land because of border fortifications built by Greece in 2012 and Bulgaria in 2014 along their borders shared with Turkey (Peters et al. 2023, 7).

The asylum seekers migrated from Italy and Greece to EU nations in northwest Europe with the main goal of traveling to nations like Sweden, Germany, Denmark, and the Netherlands (Nedergaard 2019, 81). Due to the ineffective registration of migrants and refugees in Greece and Italy, as well as the freedom of movement of people throughout the Schengen states, this was feasible in 2015 and 2016 (Nedergaard 2019, 81). The cases of the entering migrants and refugees would have been handled in Italy and Greece if they had been registered there (Nedergaard 2019, 81). The casework ought to have been done with the intention of determining whether they should be classified as non-pursued migrants and repatriated or, instead, as genuine refugees who had experienced personal persecution and were thus entitled to protection under the UN Refugee Convention (Nedergaard 2019, 81). Both immigrants and refugees may have assumed that it was simpler to get a residency card, access to welfare benefits, and refugee status in one of the northern EU nations with universalistic welfare systems than in Greece or Italy (Nedergaard 2019, 81). Italy and Greece officially justified their actions by stating that they lacked the financial and administrative resources to handle the rapid surge of numerous migrants and refugees (Nedergaard 2019, 81).

The high numbers of migrants and refugees persisted throughout 2016, and then it significantly decreased in 2017 and 2018 (Downes et al. 2021, 1103). As the migration increased, the phrase “refugee crisis” was immediately coined (Bruneau et al. 2018, 645). However, the term “European refugee crisis” refers to the highest year for refugee arrivals in the European Union, which was 2015 (Downes et al. 2021, 1103).⁵ Nevertheless, it was apparent in 2014 that the issue would be becoming increasingly worse (Downes et al. 2021, 1103). The number of refugees and asylum seekers increased significantly throughout the EU in 2014, which was

⁵ Some scholars refer to it as the “European migrant crisis”.

highlighted and characterized as a “looming” EU policy dilemma (Downes et al. 2021, 1103). As this crisis was developing, a number of academics cited the EU’s lack of comprehensive policy frameworks to address it (Downes et al. 2021, 1103).

The refugee crisis significantly impacted the EU’s internal decision-making in 2015, including the agreement on global solidarity principles (Pirro & Taggart 2018, 254). Consequently, different measures were taken by European governments (Bruneau et al. 2018, 645; Downes et al. 2021, 1103). While some nations, like Germany, welcomed the refugees, others took a stridently anti-refugee stance (Bruneau et al. 2018, 645). For instance, Denmark passed overtly anti-refugee laws permitting the confiscation of asylum seekers’ items of value and Hungary built a 175 km fence along its shared border with Serbia and began a massive public relations campaign advocating against settlement (Bruneau et al. 2018, 645).

Many European countries responded to the refugee crisis by tightening their domestic immigration and asylum policies, frequently in direct violation of their commitments under European and international law (Skleparis 2017, 283). Furthermore, several European nations, including Germany, Austria, Slovenia, Hungary, Sweden, Denmark, and Belgium, started to reintroduce temporary internal border controls as soon as the number of asylum applications began to rise dramatically to prevent a significant amount of asylum seekers from seeking shelter in their countries (Skleparis 2017, 283). In an effort to disrupt and spatially reroute the flow of migrants, governments in countries that were at the center of the Western Balkan route, such as Austria, Hungary, and Slovenia, began erecting barriers along their borders (Skleparis 2017, 283). These practices, which violated the standards of international protection, were sometimes coupled with a sharp militarization of internal border controls and the imposition of daily limits on border crossings and asylum requests (Skleparis 2017, 283).

The lasting political implications of the crisis became apparent over time. The “looming” surge that led to the 2015 European refugee crisis increased the saliency of immigration as a political issue, which is frequently directed at the number of Muslim immigrants who have entered Europe during this crisis (Downes et al. 2021, 1104). Particularly, the European refugee crisis gave the populist radical right clear electoral opportunities to capitalize on their long-standing stances on immigration (i.e., adopt nationalistic and/or anti-Islam rhetoric) and win over disgruntled voters concerned with issues like national sovereignty and ethnic identity (Downes et al. 2021, 1104).

6 Analysis

The following chapter seeks to offer an understanding of how the SVP's political platform and communications tactics were influenced by the European refugee crisis, which had a significant impact on politics throughout Europe. To achieve this, the analysis is divided into multiple subsections, each of which focuses on various crisis-related phases and events. In the first subchapter, which examines the time before the European refugee crisis, the focus is the initial position of the SVP and investigates the Eurosceptic frames used in the party program from 2011 to 2015 (publishing year: 2011), as well as the SVP's representation in the Federal Assembly after the 2011 elections. This serves as a basis to evaluate the changes in the Eurosceptic frames of the SVP in the latter chapters.

The subsequent subsection, during the European refugee crisis, it is examined how the crisis affected the frames of Euroscepticism in the SVP's political program. Analyzing the party's program from 2015 to 2019 can help reveal any changes in the SVP's Eurosceptic stance. In addition, the Federal Popular Initiative "Against Mass Immigration" in 2014, which was a direct response to the surge of (European) migrants, is examined, as well as the 2015 parliamentary elections. These subchapters explore how the European refugee crisis may have impacted voter behavior.

The third subchapter after the European refugee crisis focuses on the aftermath of the crisis's height. The crucial points of examination include the Federal popular initiative "For Moderate Immigration (Limitation Initiative)" in 2018 - which sought to address and limit immigration policies, as well as the 2019 parliamentary elections.

Lastly, the chapter concludes with a discussion on the overall impact of the crisis on the Eurosceptic frames. By encompassing this timeframe, the chapter aims to provide a comprehensive analysis of the crisis's significance for the SVP's political agenda and its potentially broader implications for Swiss politics.

6.1 Before the European Refugee Crisis

6.1.1 Eurosceptic Frames in the SVP Party Program 2011-2015

In the overview of the party program, the SVP begins by presenting its points briefly. This includes their opposition to Switzerland's membership in the European Union (EU), the European Economic Area (EEA), or North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and supports an "open-minded, self-assured foreign policy that upholds Switzerland's independence from these international organizations" (Schweizerische Volkspartei 2011, 4). Moreover, the party dedicates a chapter to "Ausländer" (i.e., foreigners), with the clear intention of limiting immigration to Switzerland (53-59). This sets the crucial premise for the popular initiative

"Against Mass Immigration", as this section will reveal the motivation of the party. The preface by Toni Brunner, the party president from 2008 to 2016, supports the Eurosceptic viewpoint by emphasizing the perceived risks and drawbacks of EU membership (8-9). The rhetoric used highlights possible drawbacks such as the loss of direct democracy, independence, and economic stability as threats to Swiss ideals and prosperity posed by the EU (8-9). The party's opposition to EU integration is further emphasized by the statement of lower earnings, more unemployment, and increasing financial responsibilities to Brussels (8-9). Moreover, he criticizes the political class and claims that the "elites" are trying to sneak Switzerland into the EU (8-9).

▪ *Socioeconomic frame*

A closer analysis of the party program from 2011 to 2015 reveals that the SVP employs several types of Eurosceptic frames. Within the socioeconomic frame, the SVP highlights Switzerland's exceptional circumstance and success, which are due to its unique strategy and rejection of harmonization with other countries, particularly the EU (11, 15). The SVP emphasizes Switzerland's tenacity during the financial crisis and credits this to its ability to preserve its own currency and central bank (12): "This teaches us to keep our own currency and not to give away our strong franc for the weak euro" (12). The argument furthers an anti-euro stance by focusing on the advantages of independence from the Eurocurrency and the freedom to customize



Figure 2 Cover Page of the SVP's Party Program 2011-2015.

policies to Switzerland's particular requirements (12).⁶ According to the party program, membership to the EU, as well as integration with the EU, lead to growing financial obligations and a burden on infrastructure, such as clogged roads and overcrowded public transit (54-55). Therefore, the SVP emphasizes the inadequacy of imposing a single legal and monetary system on nations with various mentalities, histories, social systems, debt levels, and economic performances in order to critique the EU as an “intellectual misconception” (37). The introduction of the Euro is presented as the formation of a political currency that supposedly ignores economic reality and continuously depreciates in value (37). According to the party program, Switzerland is required to take part in emergency aid and rescue initiatives because of its IMF membership as a result of the financial instability of the EU (37). Furthermore, the SVP stresses the necessity of “defending the [economic] strength of the nation’s economy against all attempts of pressure from the EU, OECD and competing foreign financial centers” (30). In this regard, the SVP continues to resist an agricultural free trade deal with the EU, thus reflecting worries about how EU trade policies would affect the agriculture industry (66). Moreover, the SVP favors a one-year residency visa cap for EU individuals who are unemployed, indicating worries about the effects of EU immigration on the labor market and social systems (58).

▪ *Cultural frame*

By emphasizing worries about immigration, multiculturalism, and security, the party’s reasoning within the cultural frame reflects Eurosceptic perspectives. As critics of the Schengen Agreement, which eliminated border restrictions, the SVP seems to believe that the EU has a detrimental impact on crime, particularly in border districts (42). This frame of view expresses doubts about how the EU handles immigration and security (42). Furthermore, the SVP highlights the value of cultural variety and rejects an EU-imposed uniform cultural policy (110). According to the party program, rather than adhering to EU cultural regulations, cultural policy should place a higher priority on the preservation of minorities and the coherence of Switzerland's linguistic regions (110). Therefore, Switzerland should reject alleged EU meddling in determining the cultural landscape of the nation in order to maintain its cultural identity and autonomy (110).

⁶ Consequently, this suggests that the financial crisis has strengthened the frames of Euroscepticism in Switzerland in 2011 already.

▪ *Sovereignty frame*

By underscoring the significance of safeguarding Switzerland's sovereignty and independence, the SVP amply expresses Eurosceptic ideas within the frame of sovereignty. With a clear commitment to preserving Switzerland's sovereignty and independence, the SVP explicitly rejects attempts by politicians and the federal government to abandon the special case of Switzerland in the name of integration and harmonization (15, 125). Moreover, the SVP expresses worry about how internationalization and globalization would affect public involvement and national decision-making further highlighting mistrust regarding the delegation of decision-making authority to supranational organizations like the EU (15, 125). The party's dedication to an independent foreign policy reveals a desire to maintain control over Switzerland's diplomatic contacts and strategic alliances, as opposed to being constrained by the EU's regulations and judgments (15). This approach reflects a desire by the SVP to protect Switzerland's capacity to act in its own best interests on the international stage as well as concerns about the potential loss of sovereignty (8).

▪ *Legitimacy frame*

Lastly, within the legitimacy frame, the SVP emphasizes issues with the EU's democratic deficit, competence, and effectiveness. The party casts doubt on the validity of EU-driven policies that can restrict Switzerland's state liberties by stressing the significance of upholding international law (15). According to the party program, in international law and agreements citizens should play a role in shaping the legal system (15). This rationale contends that direct democracy, independence, and neutrality would all be negatively impacted if Switzerland joined the EU (8). This point of view is consistent with Eurosceptic positions that place a high value on Switzerland's unique democratic system and its capacity for autonomous decision-making. Moreover, the SVP exercises criticism in regard to the EU bureaucracy's "remoteness from citizens" and their democratic shortcomings, thus emphasizing the distrust of the EU's decision-making procedures (37, 125). The SVP claims that Switzerland outperforms the EU in a number of areas, including prosperity, social structure, and overall satisfaction of the citizens (37). Therefore, the SVP links Switzerland's success to its unique direct democracy system (125). Moreover, the SVP indirectly credits itself this merit because the party was the biggest opponent of EEA accession – in contrast to the "elites in politics, business, society, and the media" (37). This populist sentiment is perpetuated by claiming that direct democracy has worked and is successful because the citizens were able to express their opinions freely (37). Therefore, the SVP positions itself as a supporter of direct democracy (37). Additionally, the

SVP condemns the Federal Council and the public administration for their readiness to join the EU and embrace its “dynamic legal development”, presenting this as a willful adherence to a “colonial contract” (37).

In conclusion, the party program from 2011 to 2015 reveals a significantly high degree of Euroscepticism in the SVP. The analysis has shown that all four frames of Eurosceptic speech are represented, i.e., socioeconomic, cultural, sovereignty, and legitimacy. Firstly, the socioeconomic frame draws attention to Switzerland's economic success and adaptability outside of the EU and raises doubts about how EU membership would positively affect the country's economy, jobs, infrastructure, and agriculture. Secondly, the cultural frame places a strong emphasis on maintaining regional security, integration, and cultural variety in the face of EU influence. Thirdly, the sovereignty frame places a strong emphasis on the value of Swiss independence, neutrality, and opposition to EU centralization. Lastly, the legitimacy frame highlights the importance of direct democracy while challenging the EU's democratic legitimacy and efficacy. Altogether, the rationale of the SVP creates a Eurosceptic narrative that places importance on Switzerland's economic independence, cultural individuality, sovereignty, and democratic legitimacy.

6.1.2 Representation of the SVP in the Federal Assembly in 2011

The Federal Assembly (the entirety of the Swiss parliament) is divided into two houses, the National Council (200 seats in total) and the Council of States (46 seats in total). During the legislation period of 2011 to 2015, SVP held 54 seats (26,6%) in the National Council (*Nationalrat*) and 7 seats (15,2%) in the Council of States (*Ständerat*). In comparison to the previous years (2007-2011), the SVP held the same number of seats in the Council of States and lost three seats in the National Council (Bundeskanzlei 2011). This is mostly due to the emergence of the Civic Democratic Party in 2008, which split off from the SVP and gained nine seats in the National Council in 2011 (Bundeskanzlei 2011).

6.2 During the European Refugee Crisis

6.2.1 The Federal Popular Initiative “Against Mass Immigration” 2014

The popular initiative “Against Mass Immigration” was submitted by the SVP in 2012. Although the submission is not a direct result of the European refugee crisis, the voting on the issue in early 2014, as the crisis was already “looming”, suggests it is fit for analysis. Although

the term “European refugee crisis” refers to the highest year for refugee arrivals in the European Union in 2015, it was apparent in 2014, as the numbers of refugees and asylum seekers increased significantly throughout the EU, that the issue would be becoming increasingly worse (Downes et al. 2021, 1103).

The popular initiative aimed at adding an article (“Article 121a”) to the Swiss Constitution which would impose yearly restrictions on the number of residence permits granted to foreign nationals (Schwok 2021, 44). Although during the campaigns, the SVP deliberately misled the public into believing that the initiative’s text only targeted non-European foreigners, this was not the case. Instead, the initiative could only apply to EU (and EFTA) citizens since they were the only foreigners who weren’t already limited by such restrictions and the national preference principle (Schwok 2021, 44). Between 2000 and 2013, Switzerland experienced a population growth of 14%, including a net migration of 89,500 individuals, mostly due to the freedom of movement, since approximately 70% of these new arrivals came from the EU (Schwok 2021, 44). As previously discussed in Chapter 5.2, the popular initiative “Against Mass Immigration” aimed at threatening the package of bilateral accords as a whole (Schwok 2021, 38). Even though the public voted in favor of the party’s plan on the 9th of February 2014, albeit by a very narrow margin of 50.3%, the party has thus successfully undercut the free movement of people inside the EU with a proposal on “stopping mass immigration” – despite the fact that most major political parties and the general public voters rejected the initiative (Schwok 2021, 43). Consequently, since the target of the popular initiatives are the nationals from the EU (and EFTA), this implies a type of Euroscepticism that is related to immigration. Freedom of movement is an essential part of the EU and by targeting this core structure, the SVP is emphasizing its hard-Eurosceptic stance. Although Pirro and van Kessel (2018, 327) identify immigration as part of the cultural Eurosceptic frame, a closer analysis reveals that within the frame of this popular initiative, there are other frames employed by the SVP to pursue their political agenda. The next section will analyze the narratives employed by the SVP and identify the variety of Eurosceptic frames.

6.2.2 Eurosceptic Frames

▪ Socioeconomic frame

Focusing on numerous economic factors, fiscal sovereignty, and the effects of mass immigration, the SVP's *argumentarium* uses several socioeconomic frames to communicate Eurosceptic ideas. These frameworks draw attention to worries about how European immigration would affect the labor market, social welfare systems, economy, and national resources.

Their *argumentarium* suggests that the detrimental effects of European integration on these economic elements include soaring rents and land prices (Schweizerische Volkspartei (SVP) 2011, 3). It implies that such projects can have a negative impact on the cost and accessibility of the local community, thus leading to social and economic inequalities (3). This part discusses how widespread immigration has an impact on societal well-being. It suggests that the increased demand for social welfare systems brought on by the inflow of immigrants may have an impact on the accessibility and availability of welfare benefits for the local people (17).

The discussion goes into further detail about how large immigration affects different types of infrastructure and resources (3, 9-10). It highlights the possible expenses related to accommodating a rise in population and demand by mentioning the effects on roads, trains, and power usage. Furthermore, the argument implies that a large inflow of immigrants may put a burden on available resources and planning capabilities by raising worries about how mass immigration would affect the housing market and spatial planning. (3, 9-10)

Furthermore, it is suggested that the pressure on wages may stem from greater rivalry in the labor market brought on by immigration, both from Europe and other areas of the world. This part of the argument raises questions about how it would affect the wages and living conditions of the local laborers (3). One component of the argument is that an advantage of immigration restrictions is the equitable treatment of immigrants, regardless of their origin, by highlighting the advantages of better competition in the labor market (5). The rationale recognizes the



Figure 3 Cover Page of the *Argumentarium* for the Popular Initiative "Against Mass Immigration".

possible benefits that immigration may have on the labor market by emphasizing the equality of opportunities for professionals from all regions of the world:

“A big advantage of this regulation is that no difference is made whether a foreigner comes from Europe or from another part of the world. If a specialist from the U.S. meets the criteria for immigration, he has the same chances as his colleague from Eastern Europe.” (5)

It is stressed that large immigration may have negative effects on the labor market, with a focus on possible effects on unemployment rates. According to the argument, increasing immigration may result in more competition for jobs, which might leave local workers unemployed (12).

In addition, the impact of European immigration, and thus integration, are highlighted in terms of the burden on social welfare institutions. According to the *argumentarium*, these institutions are put under additional strain due to the increasing demand for social services brought on by immigration, which may jeopardize their viability and efficacy (3, 10).

▪ **Cultural frame**

The SVP's *argumentarium* uses a cultural frame to communicate its Eurosceptic sentiments by emphasizing the effects of mass immigration on Switzerland's cultural identity, the difficulties associated with integration, and possible effects on families, schools, and crime rates.

The argument emphasizes how widespread immigration has affected Switzerland's sense of itself, implying that the country's cultural structure may be shaped and influenced by the influx of immigrants (19). It suggests that integration may be challenging when a sizable number of immigrants from a specific region or culture settle in Switzerland, impeding the assimilation of Swiss values and possibly resulting in the predominance of other languages and cultures. The argument compares the situation in Switzerland to that in the USA or the periphery of French, Italian, and German towns:

“A district, in other words, where a foreign culture and a foreign language prevail?” (19)

The *argumentarium* discusses how widespread immigration has affected families and educational institutions. According to the theory, a sizable immigrant population may have an impact on family relations and educational institutions (19-20). It suggests that the cultural variations brought by immigrants may have an impact on learning settings, possibly impacting social interactions, language use, and curricula (19-20). The rationale also implies that it could

be difficult to maintain Swiss values and practices when immigrant families are integrated into Swiss culture.

Moreover, it is emphasized how increased immigration may affect security and crime rates (21). It implies that the large intake of immigrants may have an impact on crime rates and that a rise in criminal activity may be attributed to cultural differences and integration difficulties brought on by mass immigration (21). The argument supports a Eurosceptic position that stresses the need for tougher immigration regulations to guarantee public safety by connecting immigration to security issues.

▪ *Sovereignty frame*

By addressing worries about the loss of control over immigration and arguing for the right to make autonomous decisions about foreigners' admission and length of stay, the SVP discourse uses the sovereignty frame to convey Eurosceptic perspectives. The *argumentarium* highlights the lack of immigration control as a major problem. It implies that Switzerland's capacity to exercise control and make decisions about its immigration policy has been weakened as a result of the agreements like the Schengen Agreement and the free movement of people inside the EU (3, 24).

"Today's situation, which has occurred due to mass immigration, has various causes. These include the opening of the borders, especially through the Schengen Agreement, the free movement of persons with the EU, the too easy family reunification from third countries, the laissez-faire policy in connection with illegal residents (Sans-Papiers) but also the dragging out of the problems in the asylum system.⁷ In particular, the inconsistent and contradictory attitude of the Federal Council and Parliament in recent years has led to this development. The Federal Council and Parliament would have had various possibilities to slow down mass immigration." (24)

The *argumentarium* highlights that Switzerland has to reclaim its independence in deciding which foreigners are admitted and how long they may remain, in order to fulfill its desire for sovereignty (3). It supports a Eurosceptic position that supports national sovereignty and the exercise of independent control over borders and immigration policy by highlighting the significance of making independent judgments on immigration-related issues (3).

⁷ Although the popular initiative does not target immigration from countries outside of the EU or illegal residents, it is part of the SVP's narrative in order to showcase the "loss of control and sovereignty" over these issues.

▪ *Legitimacy frame*

Lastly, the legitimacy frame is utilized to express Eurosceptic opinions by focusing on democratic deficit, competence, and effectiveness. It outlines the SVP's activities and legislative motions that have been made in an effort to solve these immigration-related issues. This includes several parliamentary resolutions on population control, the revision of the agreement on free movement of people, the termination of the agreement on free movement, the prevention of EU citizens abusing social services, the immediate application of the valve clause for free movement of people, the reintroduction of quotas with former EU members, and other issues.⁸ These motions, which attempted to carry out the SVP's political agenda, fell short of receiving enough support. The SVP may believe that its concerns and suggestions are not taken into account or supported sufficiently by the present democratic procedures, as suggested by this perceived democratic deficit.

Furthermore, the *argumentarium* raises doubts about the government's capability and effectiveness in resolving the immigration-related issues brought up by the SVP. It implies that the Federal Council and parliament are inconsistent and contradictory in their attempts to solve the problems as a result of mass immigration, which has left the SVP feeling frustrated and lacking in confidence in their ability to handle the matter properly. By emphasizing these challenges, the *argumentarium* aims to call into question the legitimacy of the Federal Council and parliament and suggest that different strategies would be more capable and successful in resolving the current problems, such as the popular initiative "Against Mass Immigration".

In conclusion, in the *argumentarium* all four frames as developed by Pirro and van Kessel (2018, 327) are employed to convey Eurosceptic perspectives. The socioeconomic frame emphasizes worries about the economy and the effects of mass immigration, stressing detrimental effects on several factors including rent, social assistance systems, wages, infrastructure, and the labor market. The cultural frame casts doubt on the benefits of immigration from Europe, highlighting potential negative effects on Switzerland's social dynamics and cultural structure. The sovereignty framing emphasizes the loss of immigration

⁸ Including 09.4272 Motion of the SVP parliamentary group "Control and regulation mechanisms against uncontrolled population growth", 09.4052 Motion by Jean-François Rime "Revision of the Agreement on the Free Movement of Persons between Switzerland and the EU", 9.4024 Motion of the SVP parliamentary group "Termination of the Agreement on the Free Movement of Persons. Renegotiation with the EU", 09.3399 Motion Alfred Heer "Stop the plundering of social services by EU citizens", 09.3701 Motion Luzi Stamm "Free movement of persons. Immediate application of the valve clause", 08.3886 Motion Sylvia Flückiger "Re-introduction of quotas with the old EU states", 09.527 Parliamentary initiative of the SVP parliamentary group "Application of the valve clause by parliament".

control and calls for regaining the ability to make immigration-related decisions. Lastly, the argument presents the party as a legitimate alternative with proposed solutions that are more responsive to public needs and interests by using the legitimacy frame to emphasize concerns about the lack of democracy, competence, and effectiveness within the political system.

6.2.3 Eurosceptic Frames in the SVP Party Program 2015-2019

As the 2015 parliamentary elections are taking place in October of that year, the SVP published its party program highlighting its stances on its most pressing issues. Since the adoption of the popular initiative “Against Mass Immigration” posed a grand success for the party, SVP claims that if said constitutional provision is not rightfully and effectively implemented and the EU is not willing to negotiate the abandonment of the free movement of persons, it has prepared another popular initiative to reinforce its will (Schweizerische Volkspartei 2015, 34). This will later be known as the Federal popular initiative “For Moderate Immigration (Limitation Initiative”); its vote will take place in 2018. The SVP sums up its arguments for the limitation of immigration in the following way:

“The consequences of this disastrous development can be felt and experienced daily by everyone: rising unemployment (among foreigners, the unemployment rate was 9.2 percent at the beginning of 2014), overcrowded trains, congested roads, rising rents and land prices, loss of valuable cultivated land by building up the landscape, wage pressure, crowding on the labor market, cultural change in management and burdensome high proportions of foreigners in welfare and other social services. Today's immoderateness in immigration threatens our freedom, security, full employment, our landscape and ultimately our prosperity.” (31)

However, several Eurosceptic points of view become apparent when the party rhetoric is examined on the basis of the frames developed by Pirro and van Kessel (2018).

▪ Socioeconomic frame

Within the socioeconomic context, the SVP advocates for fair free trade agreements with several nations to promote friendly and peaceful relations, highlighting the significance of expanding commercial links beyond the EU (13). This position demonstrates opposition to Switzerland’s exclusive dependence on the EU as its main commercial partner (13). Particularly in regard to agriculture, the SVP expresses worries about “sacrificing the agricultural sector on the altar of the EU” and thus, rejecting free trade agreements in agriculture and emphasizing the importance of regional production (64-65).

Moreover, the SVP opposes sponsoring “dubious activities” and contributing financially to EU initiatives regarding education and research (52-53). The SVP highlights bureaucracy and unproductive idle time in its critique of the necessity and cost-effectiveness of full cooperation with EU educational initiatives (52): “*The SVP opposes money-wasting participation in EU education and research programs.*” (53). Instead, they place a focus on the potential for global student exchange and direct university collaboration without “expensive EU initiatives” (52).

▪ **Cultural frame**

The cultural frame in this party program encompasses concerns about the potential dilution of Swiss values through institutional links with the EU, as well as the emphasis on a credible militia army for security and the opposition to EU cultural programs. The SVP argues that an envisaged institutional relationship with the EU will go against Switzerland’s values (12). They contend that this connection might jeopardize Switzerland’s sovereignty and cultural uniqueness by putting it under the dynamic legal growth and EU authority (12). Furthermore, the SVP stresses the value of a reliable militia force as the best security solution for Switzerland (6). They claim that despite the EU’s peacekeeping efforts, conflicts⁹ still exist near Switzerland and thus, preserving security, especially during times of crisis, depends on having a well-trained and equipped militia force (6). This viewpoint promotes (military) independence from the EU and expresses some skepticism regarding depending on it for security measures (6). Moreover, the SVP opposes taking part in EU efforts for cultural programs that they view as wasteful and disjointed from the interests of individuals and the economy (89). This stance implies skepticism regarding the cultural agenda of the EU and a desire for cultural policies that are more closely in line with the needs and values of Switzerland (89): “*The SVP opposes the money-wasting participation in EU cultural programs that is distant from citizens and the economy.*” (89). Lastly, regarding the European refugee crisis, the SVP condemns the Schengen/Dublin Agreement as a mistake, as it does not fulfill its promises and instead resulted in “less security, more illegal immigration and crime” (37).

▪ **Sovereignty frame**

Within the sovereignty frame, the SVP reflects Eurosceptic sentiments by opposing the creeping EU accession and emphasizing the importance of maintaining independence and decision-making authority. The SVP is openly opposed to what they perceive as a “sneaky EU admission” (4, 8, 13). They contend that other political institutions, such as the Federal Council

⁹ By “conflicts”, the SVP is hinting at the origins of the European refugee crisis.

and the legislative majority, are pushing for tighter connections with the EU (8): “*They talk of ‘framework treaties’ or ‘institutional ties’ but mean the adoption of foreign law and the judgment of foreign judges.*” (8). The SVP considers the use of foreign judges and the adoption of foreign legislation to be intrusions on Switzerland’s sovereignty and has prepared a popular initiative to ensure that national legislation remains superior to international law (34). The rationale emphasizes the probable negative effects of requiring Switzerland to embrace new EU legislative developments, highlighting the deluge of rules that would come from the EU (13). The SVP expresses worry regarding the EU Court of Justice’s exclusive jurisdiction over conflicts involving Switzerland. They advocate against it because they see such a project as “subservient” and “creating dependency” (13). Moreover, the SVP claims that other political parties want to curtail federalism and concentrate power in the federal capital of Bern as well as the EU headquarters in Brussels (9). They defend the elimination of rivalry between cantons and municipalities as well as the decentralization of a number of areas, including taxation, housing, and education (9). According to the SVP, these initiatives weaken Switzerland’s autonomy and give foreign organizations more power (9).

▪ ***Legitimacy frame***

The legitimacy frame within the party program of 2015 to 2019 focuses on the democratic deficit of international law and the EU. The SVP challenges the democratic legitimacy of international law and implies that the idea of human rights has been dithered from its original meaning in order to gain political power and influence (12). In this regard, the SVP claims that the mention of human rights is “deceptive” and “advances a centralist, statist, and socialist agenda” (12). Moreover, this criticism draws attention to a perceived absence of democratic legitimacy in the EU decision-making and European law in its entirety (12, 14). Therefore, the SVP criticizes the EU bureaucracy’s democratic shortcomings and claims that there is perceived remoteness of decision-making from the citizens (14). The party deems that this is contrasting to the Swiss political system of direct democracy and attributes Switzerland’s success in various aspects to its non-EU membership, such as affluence, social system, and even inhabitants’ sense of happiness (14). They contend that the SVP’s involvement in battling against EU and EEA membership for more than 20 years has brought them into alignment with the interests of the people and safeguarded Switzerland’s distinctive democratic system (14).

In conclusion, the discourse of the SVP exhibits Euroscepticism in several frames and aspects. The SVP advocates for trade independence, expresses worry about the agriculture industry’s

susceptibility to EU regulations, and casts doubt on the efficacy of EU research and education initiatives in the socioeconomic frame. In the cultural frame, the SVP emphasizes a viable militia force for security, expresses concerns about Swiss values being compromised by institutional ties to the EU, and opposes EU cultural initiatives. Within the sovereignty frame, the party opposes gradual EU membership, thus highlighting the value of preserving independence and the right to make decisions and expressing worry pertaining to the concentration of power as well as international laws and courts. Lastly, the SVP challenges the democratic legitimacy of international law and human rights interpretations within the legitimacy framework and contrasts Switzerland's democratic system with perceived deficits in the EU. Taking all these arguments together, the SVP creates a Eurosceptic narrative that fights for the preservation of Switzerland's independence, cultural identity, sovereignty, and democratic system.

6.2.4 Impact of the Crisis on the Parliamentary Elections of 2015

As the European refugee crisis was reaching its peak, the Swiss parliamentary elections were held in late 2015. The issue around migration, particularly due to the success of the popular initiative "Against Mass Immigration", was important in the political agenda of the SVP and fueled the debates surrounding the European refugee crisis. Consequently, the inflow of migrants and refugees, as well as the SVP's strong position on immigration laws and border security, had a huge impact on domestic politics itself and arguably impacted the election results.

In light of this, the SVP achieved a record-breaking outcome by gaining 11 seats, resulting in 65 seats out of 200 (29,4%) in the National Council (Bundeskanzlei 2015). No other party has ever attained such a high result; hence this outcome is regarded as a record-breaking one. In comparison to the election results of 2011, this results in a 2,8% gain (Bundeskanzlei 2015). Moreover, the Free Democratic Party (FDP), which is associated with a close partner of SVP, also had electoral success, securing 33 seats in the National Council (16,4%, a 1,3% gain in comparison to 2011) (Bundeskanzlei 2015). The refugee crisis may not have directly affected their performance, but the wider discussions and public perceptions of migration concerns had an influence on the election dynamics. Taking into account both party results, this leads to a 45,8% representation in the National Council (Bundeskanzlei 2015).

The modifications were quite small regarding the Council of States elections. The SVP maintained their seats from the previous year (Bundeskanzlei 2015). However, the FDP achieved a minor improvement by winning two more seats, thus increasing their representation in the Council of States (Bundeskanzlei 2015). The Green Liberal Party (GLP), on the other hand, lost all seats in the Council of States (Bundeskanzlei 2015). These election results illustrate the different voter choices and the dynamic character of the nation's democracy, illuminating the nuanced dynamics and complexity inherent in Swiss politics.

6.3 After the European Refugee Crisis

6.3.1 Eurosceptic Frames in the SVP Party Program 2019-2023

In the party program from 2019 to 2023, several narratives which have been employed in the previous years are reiterated. Therefore, this subchapter will follow the same structure as the previous analysis of the SVP party program.



Figure 4 Cover Page of the SVP's Party Program 2015-2019.

▪ Socioeconomic frame

By focusing on worries about how EU policies would affect the economy and job security, the SVP's arguments within the socioeconomic frame clearly reflect its Euroscepticism (Schweizerische Volkspartei 2019, 4). The free movement of people from the EU is the main topic of discussion since it is seen as a threat to Swiss citizens' job security (4). The party supports autonomous immigration regulation, the reinstatement of foreign immigration quotas, and limitations on unrestricted immigration (4) – which is an aspect of the later discussed cultural Eurosceptic frame. In addition, the SVP contends that unchecked EU immigration disproportionately harms older employees and hinders the hiring of competent workers since it is thought to be entering Switzerland with cheap labor and dependents (4, 37, 38). The party program casts doubt on the benefits of the free movement of people, pointing out that while the GDP may have increased, incomes for most people have not increased noticeably (38). The rise in immigration, mainly from the EU, and the stagnation of the per capita GDP are cited as examples of the drawbacks of the free movement of person agreement with the EU (38). Moreover, the SVP stresses its opposition to the ongoing implementation of EU law in the transportation industry (85).

▪ *Cultural frame*

Within the cultural frame, the SVP addresses worries about immigration, diversity, and their influence on Switzerland's cultural identity and security. According to the party program, in order to preserve autonomy and control over cultural policy, the SVP rejects participation in EU cultural projects, deeming them unnecessary and disconnected from the needs of citizens and the economy (113). The party's immigration policy emphasizes the perceived risk to job security, notably as a result of EU citizens' immigration (4). The SVP wants to protect Swiss cultural values and guarantee the welfare of its residents by supporting autonomous regulation of immigration and giving Swiss citizens priority in filling job vacancies (37). Therefore, this merges the socioeconomic and cultural frame of the Eurosceptic argument.

▪ *Sovereignty frame*

In regard to the sovereignty frame, the SVP continues to defend Switzerland's sovereignty and independence. According to the party program, exercising self-determination necessitates distance from institutional integration into the EU since doing so would result in the imposition of “foreign laws and the participation of foreign courts” (10). This approach emphasizes the party's opposition to ceding control of decision-making to outside parties and its determination to preserve Switzerland's independence by creating its own laws and judicial system (10). Moreover, the SVP continues to stress that Switzerland shouldn't become dependent on the EU (11). The party argues that safeguarding Switzerland's independence is essential for preserving its wealth and economic success (11). The party positions itself against increasing integration with the EU and underlines the necessity of maintaining control over Switzerland's decision-making processes.

▪ *Legitimacy frame*

The employed legitimacy frame by the SVP persists to challenge the democratic legitimacy, competence, and efficacy inside the EU. The party accuses the national “political elites” of aiming to subvert Switzerland's liberal federal constitution under the guise of “international law” and exposing the nation to foreign pressure (3). The SVP implies a lack of democratic accountability and respect for the will of the people by accusing these elites of ignoring popular efforts and attempting to incorporate Switzerland into the EU without a vote (3).¹⁰ Moreover,

¹⁰ Although the SVP claims this, according to Article 140(b) Federal Constitution, accession to collective security organizations or supranational communities shall be submitted to a vote of the people and the cantons since it is subject to the mandatory referendum. However, the SVP attempts to create a narrative in which these “elites” are attempting to avoid this mandatory referendum by implementing EU laws without an explicit accession: “Supposed political elites want to undermine our liberal federal constitution under the pretext of ‘international

the party underlines that Switzerland shall continue to be independent of state integration because this would result in “servitude” - although the SVP acknowledges the value of maintaining positive economic and neighborly connections with the EU (14). However, the SVP positions itself against greater links with the EU and offers an alternative vision of preserving amicable relations without losing democratic legitimacy and sovereignty by underlining the risks of integration and the necessity to protect Switzerland's independence (14).



Figure 5 SVP's depiction of the EU-Swiss relations. (Schweizerische Volkspartei 2019, 3).

To conclude, the SVP's argumentation reflects a consistent Eurosceptic stance across multiple frames. Although the SVP still holds to its core anti-European stance, the severity and range of arguments have arguably softened. The party places a strong emphasis on defending Switzerland's economic interests, ensuring job security, and challenging EU policies in the socioeconomic frame. In the cultural frame, the SVP emphasizes the protection of Swiss cultural identity, independent immigration policy, and opposition to EU cultural initiatives. The

law' and subject us to foreign coercion. They do not want to implement popular initiatives. They want to creep us into the EU without a referendum. Direct democracy has become inconvenient and annoying to them." (3)

sovereignty framework emphasizes how significant Switzerland's independence, autonomy, and opposition to institutional integration into the EU are. Lastly, the party criticizes the democratic deficit in the EU and promotes direct democracy and thus, democratic legitimacy within the legitimacy framework. The party's arguments, which emphasize national sovereignty, economic independence, cultural preservation, and democratic values, are generally consistent with its previous party programs.

6.3.2 Parliamentary Elections of 2019

In late 2019, the Swiss electorate voted for its Federal Assembly. 45.1% of eligible voters participated (Bundesamt für Statistik (BFS) 2019a, 17). The SVP, the party which decisively secured a grand victory in the National Council elections in 2015, had to endure the most significant losses in the 2019 elections for the National Council (BFS 2019a, 6). In total, the SVP lost 12 seats in the National Council, which amounts approximately to a 3,8% deficit (BFS 2019a, 6). However, it continues to be the most powerful party, comprising 53 seats and thus, yielding 25,6% in the National Council (BFS 2019a, 6). In comparison to 2011, the SVP holds one less mandate in 2019.

Moreover, the remaining three largest parties have suffered losses as well (BFS 2019a, 6). The Social Democratic Party (SP) dropped by 2,0%, the Free Democratic Party (FDP) by 1,3%, and the Christian Democratic People's Party (CVP) by 0.3% (BFS 2019a, 6). In terms of mandates, the FDP and SP each lost 4 seats (in sum 39 and 29 mandates, respectively), while the CVP lost 2 seats (in sum 25 mandates) (BFS 2019a, 6). These are considered the worst outcomes in the history of all three parties (BFS 2019a, 6).

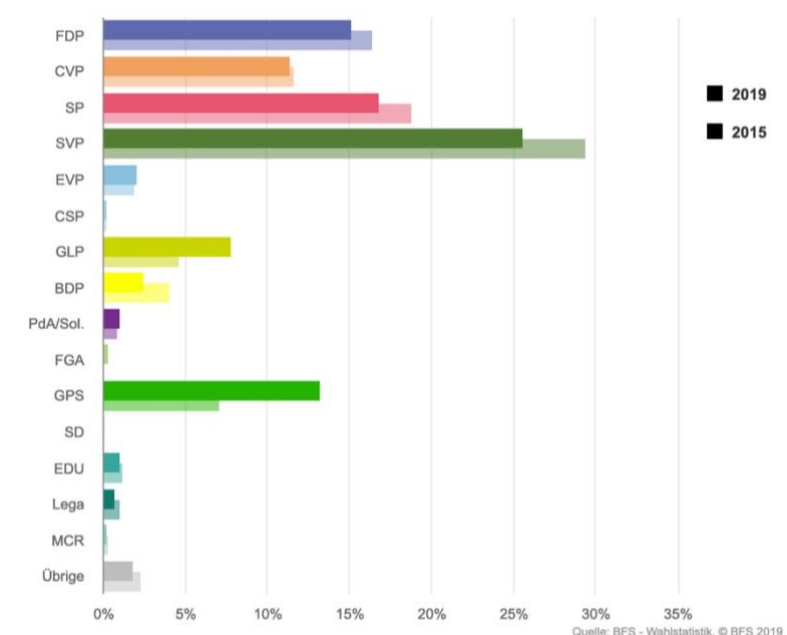


Figure 6 National Council: Strength of Parties in %.
A comparison of 2019 and 2015. (Bundesamt für Statistik 2019b).

Nevertheless, the Greens (GPS) and the Green Liberals (GLP) gained the most votes in comparison to previous years (BFS 2019a, 6). Both parties - which focus on environmental issues - experienced increases in their respective party shares of 6.1% (GPS) and 3.2% (GLP), respectively, reaching 13.2% (GPS) and 7.8% (GLP) (BFS 2019a, 6). Consequently, the GPS newly held the fourth-strongest representation in the National Council due to a gain of 17 mandates (BFS 2019a, 6). In total, the GPS holds 28 mandates and the GLP 16 mandates out of 200 (BFS 2019a, 6).

Overall, the elections of the National Council in 2019 experienced a push to the left. The party strength of the left-wing parties (this includes the SP, GPS, and smaller parties) has improved by 4.3% as compared to the 2015 elections and sums up to a total of 31,4% (BFS 2019a, 8). This is considered the second-best outcome since 1919 (BFS 2019a, 8). The center parties (including parties such as the GLP, the Evangelical People's Party (EVP), and the Conservative Democratic Party (BDP)) increased to 12,6% in total due to a gain of 1,7% (BFS 2019a, 8). However, if the CVP is considered as a center party, the total party strength in the center lay at 24% in total (BFS 2019a, 8). Lastly, the SVP's party strength in 2019 sums up to 27,7% due to the support of the minor right-wing parties (BFS 2019a, 8). However, this falls 4,3% short of the peak in 2015, which lied at 32% (BFS 2019a, 8). Furthermore, if the FDP is additionally accounted for as a right-wing party, the total party strength of these right-wing equals to 42,8%, which results in a deficit of 5,6% compared to 2015 (BFS 2019a, 8).

In the elections of the Council of States, there is less movement visible. The SVP managed to gain one more seat in comparison to the last elections in 2015. However, the FDP lost one mandate and the SP lost two, while the mandates of the CVP remained at 13 in total. The GPS managed to increase their seats by gaining four more seats, summing up to five seats in total. In conclusion, the leftward tendency shown in the National Council was echoed in the elections for the Council of States. Only the larger parties often obtain representation due to the lesser number of seats (46 in total). However, the GPS's remarkable gain of four seats merits attention. Although there has been a definite shift to the left in the political landscape, it is crucial to note that the SVP also managed in winning another mandate in the Council of States.

6.3.3 The Federal Popular Initiative “For Moderate Immigration (Limitation Initiative)” 2020

As previously stated in chapters 5.2 and 6.2.3, the SVP showed dissatisfaction with the implementation of the popular initiative “Against Mass Immigration”. As stated in the party program of 2015 to 2019, the SVP finds the following: “*Today's immoderateness in immigration threatens our freedom, security, full employment, our landscape and ultimately our prosperity.*” (31). Consequently, the party gathered signatures to launch another popular initiative and submitted the new constitutional provision Article 121b in 2018 (Schwok 2021, 46-47). This would become known as the Federal popular initiative “For Moderate Immigration” (“Limitation Initiative”) and was scheduled for voting in September 2020 (Schwok 2021, 46). The limitation initiative urged an immediate suspension of the bilateral agreement on the free movement of people, in contrast to the prior initiative (Schwok 2021, 47). As a consequence of this, this would lead to a violation of the bilateral agreements with the EU, thus invoking the “guillotine clause”, which states the termination of one agreement results in the termination of all subsequent agreements with the EU (Schwok 2021, 47). According to the initiative’s Article 121b, Switzerland may not sign new international treaties which allowed for the free movement of foreign nationals. However, the initiative was rejected by 61.7% of the Swiss electorate (Schwok 2021, 47).

While the SVP initiated the “Against Mass Immigration” popular initiative to demonstrate popular support, the Swiss electorate rejected the proposed text the second time. This presents an opportunity to analyze the voting behavior and compare the framing of both initiatives by the SVP, as both initiatives tackle the same issue. It is crucial to consider that the peak of the European refugee crisis occurred five years prior, and the country was also grappling with the impacts of the pandemic. As a result, the health crisis may have diverted attention from the immigration issue, which the SVP claims to be a pressing concern. However, there may be several factors that potentially influence the voting behavior.

6.3.4 Eurosceptic Frames

Due to the significant success of the popular initiative “Against Mass Immigration”, the SVP sought to build on this achievement. Consequently, the party launched the Limitation Initiative. In light of this, the SVP created a specific committee to further their cause in accordance with their campaign goals, namely the “Committee for the Popular Initiative for Moderate

Immigration”. This committee played a key role in promoting the Limitation Initiative. In order to retain transparency and clarity, the “Committee for the Popular Initiative for Moderate Immigration” will be herewith referred to as “CMI-SVP”.

The CMI-SVP were enabled to create a unique website dedicated to the Limitation Initiative in order to their campaign activities. This website acted as the campaign's core information hub, providing in-depth details, resources, and updates. Notably, the website included an *argumentarium* outlining the CMI-SVP's arguments for supporting immigration restrictions. The *argumentarium* provided a thorough breakdown of the party's position. Therefore, this subchapter will follow the structure of the previous analysis in order to examine the Eurosceptic frames employed by the CMI-SVP in the *argumentarium*.

▪ **Socioeconomic frame**

A variety of issues including the economy, trade, unemployment, and the effect of EU policy on Switzerland is covered by the CMI-SVP's arguments within the socioeconomic frame. These arguments support the party's Eurosceptic stance by emphasizing the perceived drawbacks of the agreement on the free movement of people. The “burden” that widespread immigration causes on Switzerland's infrastructure, social services, and environment are examples brought up by the CMI-SVP (Committee for the Popular Initiative for Moderate Immigration (Schweizerische Volkspartei) [CMI-SVP] 2020, 3). The party contends that the influx of immigrants, drawn by the high standard of living and extensive social benefits offered in Switzerland, has had a number of negative consequences, including stagnant wages, unemployment among older workers, rising social welfare rates, higher housing costs, and congestion in transportation systems (CMI-SVP 2020, 3, 9, 12, 36). According to the *argumentarium*, unrestricted immigration from the EU has a detrimental negative to Switzerland's economic development and well-being (CMI-SVP 2020, 28).

The CMI-SVP contends that one consequence of the Covid-19 pandemic is the rise in tensions in the labor market in Switzerland which brought in more competition from EU employees who



Figure 7 Cover Page of the Argumentarium for the Limitation Initiative.

have lower salary expectations (CMI-SVP 2020, 9, 12). Furthermore, the CMI-SVP claims that this “flood of low-cost labor from the EU” displaces Swiss workers and raises unemployment rates (CMI-SVP 2020, 3, 12, 32).

The CMI-SVP emphasizes the dwindling significance of the EU as a market for Swiss goods in terms of trade and economic ties (CMI-SVP 2020, 62). They stress the strategic importance of Switzerland as a sales market for the EU, noting that a large portion of EU exports is made to Switzerland (CMI-SVP 2020, 63-64). However, the party maintains that Switzerland benefits from the EU less than the EU gains from Switzerland, and it supports this argument with its own statistics (CMI-SVP 2020, 64). Moreover, the SVP argues that the substantial pay gap between Switzerland and other European nations limits the benefits of the free movement of people inside the EU for citizens of Switzerland (CMI-SVP 2020): “*Swiss nationals can hardly benefit from the free movement of persons, because practically no European employer comes even close to the Swiss wage level*” (78). They contend that the potential benefits of the free movement regime for Swiss residents are diminished since European firms are unable to rival the Swiss salary level (CMI-SVP 2020, 78).

- ***Cultural frame***

Examining the CMI-SVP's arguments within the cultural frame reveals that their rhetoric exhibits a stronger Eurosceptic sentiment than previously. The party focuses a strong emphasis on the possible drawbacks of mass immigration, emphasizing the “burden it causes on efforts at integration and the perceived influence on Swiss society” (CMI-SVP 2020, 3, 57, 77). This includes references to rising crime rates, community cultural shifts, and difficulties encountered in educational and recreational settings (CMI-SVP 2020, 3, 8, 53, 55-57, 77). The SVP fortifies its Eurosceptic position within the cultural frame by emphasizing the possible challenges to Swiss identity, social conflicts, and the perceived demands on the welfare state.

- ***Sovereignty frame***

Within the sovereignty frame, the CMI-SVP emphasizes its worry about the potential erosion of Switzerland's sovereignty by presenting excessive immigration as a danger to self-determination (CMI-SVP 2020, 5, 57). The party contends that a significant intake of immigrants weakens the nation's capacity to autonomously select its future, implying that choices about immigration and demographic shifts impact decision-making (CMI-SVP 2020,

5, 57). The CMI-SVP's focus on sovereignty shows its dedication to preserving Switzerland's independence and self-determination and is consistent with its previous rhetoric.

- ***Legitimacy frame***

However, the *argumentarium* demonstrates a lack of the use of the legitimacy frame. The only argument that could be perceived as such is the claim that “the will of the people” has not been rightfully implemented after 2014 and the compromise found with the EU has not been “decided by the Swiss electorate”, thus leading to a democratic deficit even if the CMI-SVP does not explicitly name it as such (CMI-SVP 2020, 5).

In sum, the CMI-SVP's position exhibits a clear Euroscepticism within the socioeconomic, cultural, and sovereignty frames. Throughout the *argumentarium*, the party stresses the damaging effects of “unchecked immigration” on the nation's economy, society, and sense of national identity. The party expresses concern about challenges to self-determination, cultural changes, and competitiveness in the job market. However, in contrast to previous rhetoric, the *argumentarium* does not employ the same degree of the legitimacy frame. It is evident that the socioeconomic frame in particular has been the most extensively utilized in the CMI-SVP's *argumentarium*. The party's emphasis on protecting Switzerland's economic interests, ensuring job security for nationals, and questioning the benefits of EU policies, particularly in relation to immigration and the free movement of persons, is consistently present throughout the document. This framing dominates the analysis, highlighting the significance of the socioeconomic frame within their Eurosceptic stance. Furthermore, stronger rhetoric in the cultural frame is identifiable as well, particularly in regard to crime and education.

6.4 Discussion: Impact of Crisis

The SVP has had a substantial impact on Swiss politics with its Eurosceptic rhetoric since its rise in the 1990s and continuously highlighted its worries about immigration, national sovereignty, and European integration.

Prior to the crises, the SVP combined the predominate socioeconomic frame with the frames of sovereignty, legitimacy, and culture. This study has demonstrated that the party regularly expresses Euroscepticism in its reasoning with the socioeconomic frame being the most frequently used over the observed periods. Notably, the socioeconomic frame remained the strongest over the course of the years, demonstrating that the SVP continued to prioritize issues

involving immigration and the economy. These findings are consistent with the analysis by Sarrasin et al. (2018) on Swiss residents' reluctance to join the EU. The finding that the socioeconomic frame remained the strongest during the analyzed timeframe implies that economic considerations have a significant impact on how the public feels about joining the EU, thus supporting this correlation.

Furthermore, during the European refugee crisis, the SVP experienced a significant increase in support. This is evident in the success of the popular initiative “Against Mass Immigration” and the crucial gains by the SVP in the 2015 elections. The European refugee crisis had an impact on how strong the Eurosceptic frames of the SVP were. Although the SVP's popular initiative “Against Mass Immigration” exclusively targeted European immigrants, this study reveals that the party's Eurosceptic rhetoric was influenced by the refugee crisis in Europe. Concerns over immigration and cultural change were exacerbated by the crisis, which also drove an increase in Eurosceptic views and consequently, in votes as well. The findings of this thesis add to the existing scholarly literature about Euroscepticism and how voting patterns and crises are related to it. The thesis emphasizes how crises, such as the European refugee crisis, can cause an increase in Eurosceptic frames to develop. This finding broadly supports the work of other studies in this area linking Euroscepticism with crises (e.g., Pirro & Taggart 2018; Peet & La Guardia 2014; Pirro & van Kessel 2018). For instance, Peet and La Guardia (2014) mention the fall in support for the EU during the economic crisis and the rise of populist parties hostile to both the EU and immigration. In this regard, it can therefore be assumed that the European refugee crisis led to more Euroscepticism as well.

Moreover, during the European Parliament elections of 2014, the media predicted a great rise in the votes for populist Eurosceptic parties which was not entirely realized (Pirro & Taggart 2018, 254). This anticipation of a populist ascendancy in times of crisis lay on both the ideological persuasions of these parties and the most recent decline of legitimacy that looked to impact the EU (Pirro & Taggart 2018, 254). On the basis of the voting behavior during the refugee crisis (2014-2015), this was evident in the votes for the popular initiative and during the parliamentary election in which the SVP achieved a record-breaking outcome by gaining 11 seats, resulting in 65 seats out of 200 (29,4%) in the National Council (Bundeskanzlei 2015). No other party has ever attained such a high result; hence this outcome is regarded as a record-breaking one. In comparison to the election results of 2011, this results in a 2,8% gain (Bundeskanzlei 2015). However, in 2019 the SVP's party strength corresponded to 27,7% with

the support of other minor right-wing parties, falling short in a total of 4,3% (BFS 2019a, 8). Therefore, this study adds to this issue by noting how the prominence of Eurosceptic frames within the SVP in Switzerland was affected by the European migration crisis, which resulted in increased support for the party. It highlights how crises may have a meaningful impact on public opinion and party choices, as well as act as catalysts for the formation of Euroscepticism.

The decrease in the representation of the SVP in the National Council following the crises suggests that the effect of crises on popular opinion may have real repercussions for political parties. The shifting voter support dynamics imply that crises can affect the predominance of Eurosceptic discourse and the general election environment. This study found that after the European refugee crisis, the cultural frame has become more prominent, bringing to light worries about cultural change and the preservation of Swiss identity. In addition, as previously demonstrated in chapter 6.3.4, the SVP links immigration with rising crime rates, community cultural shifts, and difficulties encountered in educational and recreational settings, thus strengthening its Eurosceptic position within the cultural frame by emphasizing the possible challenges to Swiss identity, social conflicts, and the perceived demands on the welfare state.

Simultaneously, the prominence of the legitimacy and sovereignty frames significantly decreased in 2020. There are several possible explanations for this result. A possible explanation for this might be that the notion of the sovereignty and legitimacy frame appears to be very interconnected in the case of the SVP due to the political system of direct democracy in Switzerland. The sovereigns are the cantons and the Swiss electorate, thus leading sovereignty to be legitimized by democracy. In the study conducted by Sarrasin et al. (2018), the authors found that self-reported right-wing views were linked to a greater likelihood of rejecting the EU on the basis of cultural and political factors. However, their opposition to the EU increased as their perception of their political power increased contrary to the authors' hypothesis and findings of Abts and Baute (2021) which demonstrated that perceived powerlessness typically leads to higher Euroscepticism during the 2014 Belgian National Election Study survey. Consequently, Switzerland's unique political system as well as its bilateral relations with the EU reveal that the perception of powerlessness does not influence Euroscepticism, but instead the perception of power since by opposing the membership of the EU, the Swiss electorate is exercising its political right which results in the perception of greater political power. Consequently, as the Swiss electorate had accepted the popular initiative "Against Mass Immigration" and thus, exercised their political power, the awareness, and

perception of said power, i.e., the sovereignty and legitimacy frame, did not appear in the popular initiative “For Moderate Immigration (Limitation Initiative)” as it may not resonate with the audience any longer. Unfortunately, these findings are rather difficult to interpret because the time frame of the study by Sarrasin et al. (2018) contained a sample from 2009 to 2014. Additional research is needed to better understand the decrease of the sovereignty and legitimacy frame in 2020 by conducting a longitudinal analysis and how these frames affect the voting behavior of the electorate. In 2020, the sovereignty frame raised concerns about the erosion of Switzerland's sovereignty due to excessive immigration from the EU and the legitimacy frame argued that “the will of the people” had not been rightfully implemented after 2014. In contrast to previous years and rhetoric, it illustrates that the prominence of both frames diminished drastically. Despite this promising finding, a further study with more focus on explaining the result is therefore necessary and strongly suggested.

The findings of this thesis demonstrated the connection between crisis, Euroscepticism, and voting patterns. The decrease in SVP votes following the European refugee crisis demonstrates how it affected public opinion and party preferences. According to the shifting dynamics, crises may serve as triggers for the emergence of Euroscepticism while also affecting the prevalence of particular frames within the party's discourse.

7 Conclusion

This thesis set out to examine the influence of the European refugee crisis on the Eurosceptic frames of the Swiss People's Party (SVP). By analyzing relevant writings and materials, including party programs and other resources, the study employed a qualitative methodology to understand the evolution of Eurosceptic frames within the SVP before, during, and after the crisis.

The SVP has played a significant role in Swiss politics, with its Eurosceptic rhetoric centering around concerns about immigration, national sovereignty, democracy, the economy, and Swiss cultural identity. Throughout the observed period, the party consistently prioritized the socioeconomic frame, focusing on issues related to immigration and the economy. This finding aligns with previous research on Swiss residents' reluctance to join the EU, emphasizing the significant impact of economic considerations on public sentiment toward European integration.

Furthermore, the European refugee crisis had a profound effect on the SVP's Eurosceptic frames, resulting in increased support and electoral gains for the party. The success of the SVP's popular initiative "Against Mass Immigration" and its strong performance in the 2015 elections demonstrated the party's growing influence during the European refugee crisis. Therefore, a link between the crisis and the strengthening of Eurosceptic views may be established, reinforcing the existing literature on the association between crises and Euroscepticism.

The results revealed the importance of several frames in the SVP's discourse. The cultural frame became more important throughout the period under study, expressing worries about cultural change and the maintenance of Swiss identity. This change in emphasis demonstrates how emergencies, like the refugee crisis, may heighten concerns about immigration and cultural change, further strengthening Euroscepticism.

However, there was a significant decrease in the prominence of the legitimacy and sovereignty frames in 2020. A few possible causes for this decline include Switzerland's distinct political structure and direct democracy. The decreasing importance of these frameworks may have been caused by the perception of political power and the exercise of political rights through the continuous opposition to EU membership. Nevertheless, further study is necessary, particularly through longitudinal analysis, to gain a more complete understanding of this decline.

This thesis has provided a deeper insight into Euroscepticism in a non-member state, as well as how these frames have changed over the years. In addition, this thesis is the first comprehensive investigation of the SVP's rhetoric in regard to Euroscepticism. Overall, by identifying a link between crises, Euroscepticism, and voting behavior, this thesis adds to the body of current scholarly literature. The thesis shows how the SVP's Eurosceptic perspectives were influenced by the European refugee crisis, which then affected public opinion and party preferences. Crises can serve as catalysts for the growth of Eurosceptic discourse and influence the dominance of particular frameworks within political parties. It is therefore likely that such intricate interactions exist between crises, political discourse, and public opinion.

There are several potential biases and limitations in the design and data collection methods of the thesis that need to be considered. Firstly, the survey only focuses on SVP rhetoric, which may not be representative of all types of Euroscepticism in Switzerland and potentially may not be extrapolated to other examples. Secondly, the methodology utilized to collect the data is mostly based on data from the SVP website, which may not be an accurate reflection of the party's or Switzerland's broader Eurosceptic discourse, as there may be more discourse formats, such as interviews, public speeches, or posts on social media. Thirdly, a potential source of bias in the study is the qualitative analysis's subjectivity. The interpretation of language patterns, speech, and frame prominence may be influenced by the researcher's personal biases and preconceptions, leading to subjective interpretations of the data – even if the thesis followed a stringent methodology and establish explicitly the criteria for identifying trends toward Euroscepticism in discourse. Lastly, the findings of the study may not be generalized outside the Swiss context. Switzerland's particular historical and political setting as well as the distinctive characteristics of the SVP may limit the findings' application to other countries or political contexts.

Notwithstanding these limitations, the study suggests that more research into the dynamics of Euroscepticism, crises, and voting patterns should be conducted. It is crucial to how societal issues, political discourse, and the larger political environment interact to shape Euroscepticism. Examining these patterns might help policymakers and academics to better understand the variables influencing public opinion on European integration and develop strategies to address them.

Moreover, future research might build on the findings of this thesis to examine the effects of crises on voter behavior in the Swiss parliament, in particular by examining the rise of the SVP during the refugee crisis of 2015 and the significant gains made by the Greens (GPS) in 2019 as a result of concerns about climate change. Researchers can acquire a thorough grasp of how crises affect legislative decision-making by investigating the voting patterns and policy views of various political parties during these crises. This research might provide insight into whether and how these crises affected the SVP's Euroscepticism and other parties' policy responses, as well as how these factors affected parliamentary dynamics.

This thesis emphasizes how different linguistic areas in Switzerland have distinct levels of Euroscepticism, with higher levels in German- and Italian-speaking regions and lower levels in French-speaking parts. This link between language and Euroscepticism might be explored in further detail. Examining the language and cultural elements that contribute to these regional variations in Euroscepticism might be beneficial. Researchers might look at whether linguistic disparities in political discourse, cultural differences, or historical reasons contribute to the development of Euroscepticism. This study would contribute to the larger body of knowledge on the effects of linguistic and cultural factors on political sentiments by offering a more nuanced understanding of the connection between language and Euroscepticism in Switzerland.

8 References

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On my honour as a student of the Diplomatic Academy of Vienna, I submit this work in good faith and pledge that I have neither given nor received unauthorized assistance on it.

(Word Count: 23'159)