Social Blocs, Political Cleavages and Institutional Change in Switzerland

A Neorealist Approach

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Abstract

What are the relationships between political cleavages, the formation of social blocs and socio-economic characteristics such as income and education? The present master thesis analyzes the links between socio-economic factors, the formation of socio-political groups and social blocs in Switzerland. After assessing the country's political stability in the last decades, a long-run analysis of the socio-economic determinants of voting outcomes, political leaning and policy preferences are conducted. The results show evidence that, regarding voting outcomes, Switzerland political landscape appears to be structured by a brahmin left versus merchant right divide, as theorized by Piketty. However, the results concerning political leaning show that, while right leaning evolved into a merchant pattern, left leaning shows a trend towards an *embourgeoisement*. Finally, the results from a latent class analysis aimed at identifying the recomposition of the Swiss social blocs in the late 90s are presented. This master thesis is the first work to conduct such an analysis for Switzerland, and the aim of this essay is to provide a first step into a overall analysis of the political economy of institutional change in Switzerland in the last decades, from a neorealist perspective.

1 Introduction

1.1 The Swiss model under pressure

Switzerland represents an interesting case study for the analysis of institutional change. Despite some widespread stereotypes, such as the supposed slowness and rigidity of the Swiss political system due to the multiple veto points allowed through direct democracy, the country underwent important institutional, economic, as well as political change in the last decades. The Swiss model of capitalism is also difficult to classify in the Varieties of Capitalism (VoC) framework. At first glance, Switzerland appears to be a very liberal and open economy, but Hall and Soskice (2001) famously ranked Switzerland among the coordinated market economies (CMEs).

In *Capitalism against Capitalism*, a book which, before Hall and Soskice and the VoC literature, already described two competing models of capitalism, Michel Albert (2009) underlined the many peculiarities of the Swiss model, that he, at first glance, thought of as "the very incarnation of liberal economic philosophy and laissez-faire capitalism" (Albert 2009, 131). The author recounts how, during a visit to Switzerland, he learned to his surprise that the Swiss insurance and financial systems were highly regulated. His personal confrontation to the Swiss model made him realize that he was "discovering a new form of capitalism in which the price tag, the material aspect of a product, was secondary to the service being offered, in other words, the whole web of non-material, subjective, even emotional factors woven into the product." (Albert 2009, 132). This new form of capitalism, that he named the *Rhine model* or *Alpine capitalism* (which includes Germany, Switzerland, Austria or even Japan) represented an alternative system to the *neo-American* model. Unlike Hall and Soskice, who stressed that CMEs and LMEs produced similar economic performance and should diverge by following their own specific paths, Albert argued that, despite the economic and social superiority of the Rhine model, the latter ran the risk of gradual conversion to the neo-American model (Albert 2009).

Despite the structural weakness of the Swiss federal state, the weakness of labor unions and the predominance of business interests, Switzerland's economy indeed developed various non-market and non-competitive coordination mechanisms throughout the 20th century, which go even beyond the regulated insurance and financial systems which surprised Albert so much. One can think of, for instance, the cartelization of major Swiss industries which was actively supported by the state through public subsidies in the interwar period (see Boillat 2011 for the case of the Swiss watch industry) or the late creation and expansion of the Swiss welfare state

after the Second World war, even though the latter remains small compared to other welfare state regimes (Obinger 1998). Swiss corporate governance also displayed strong differences from a market-based, shareholder-oriented system which typically prevails in Anglo-Saxon countries. Until the mid-1980s, Swiss corporate governance was an "insider-oriented" type of system characterized by self-regulation by private actors with minimal legal framework, "selective protectionism" (*Vinkulierung*) in favor of Swiss shareholders and blockholders and strong cooperation between business actors, associations and networks (Mach et al. 2007).

According to Katzenstein (1985), small European states like Switzerland were likely to develop such coordinated and corporatist institutions and thus form a particular type of capitalism different from the liberal model of Great-Britain and the US and from the statist model of France and Japan. In fact, small domestic markets, international competitive pressure and the economy's dual structure of small states make the latter likely to develop into a "democratic corporatism" type of capitalism. But among democratic corporatism systems, Katzenstein still stressed that Switzerland could be classified as a "liberal variant" due to weak labor unions and the dominance of employer's associations.

Therefore, Swiss capitalism represents a peculiar case with both liberal and non-liberal institutions: weak labor union density and strong business side; labor market flexibility and weak state intervention are all features that could sort the Swiss case into the "liberal market economy" type of capitalism (LMEs). The uniqueness of the Swiss model, which combined both strong liberal and coordinated elements, led Trampusch and Mach (2011) to talk about the "Swiss hybrid model" (SHM).

However, since the global neoliberal turn of the late 20th, the SHM is under pressure and is gradually mutating into a neoliberal type of capitalism (Trampusch and Mach 2011). The so-called "structural reforms" advocated by international organizations such as the OECD, but also promoted internally by various Swiss actors, led to subsequent waves of neoliberal reforms in almost all institutional areas. In the early 90s, the Swiss government launched the so-called economic revitalization program, largely influenced by publications from neoliberal Swiss economists such as David de Pury and representatives from the big internationalized corporations. The revitalization program's objectives were to improve the competitiveness of the Swiss economy by increasing competition in the domestic market and by liberalizing and privatizing the public sector. One of the main reforms was the Cartel Law of 1995, which created a competition commission (ComCo), reduced anti-competitive practices and the power of Swiss cartels. Some public sectors such as the telecom sector were liberalized and privatized: *Postes, téléphones, télégraphes* was for example partially privatized after the creation of Swisscom in 1998 (Mach, Häusermann, and Papadopoulos 2003).

Regarding the liberalization of corporate governance, the *Stock Corporation law* of 1991 and the *Federal Act on Stock Exchange and Securities Trading* (SESTA) of 1995, by strengthening minority and foreign shareholder rights, strongly liberalized the so-called *"Forteresse des Alpes"* ("Alps Fortress"), a metaphor used by the international finance community to illustrate the protectionist Swiss financial system (David, Mach, and Schnyder 2015). The trade unions

crisis of the 1990s facilitated further the reconsideration of collective labor agreements such as wage indexation schemes.

The neoliberal transformation of the Swiss socio-economic model is thus underway, but remains nonetheless far from complete. Trade unions and the Swiss left were partially successful in blocking some of the reforms through referendum. As such, the privatization of the energy sector met some resistance since the *law on the electricity market* was rejected through popular vote in 2002. The future of the Swiss energy sector, which remains partly public, is subject to heated debates given the deterioration of international context since the Covid crisis and the war in Ukraine[1]. Other reforms directed towards labor market flexibility (1996), reducing pension rights (1996) and unemployment benefits (1997) also were blocked through referendum. Unions were particularly successful to compromise through the bilateral negotiations with the European Union (EU) and various "flanking measures" were adopted in exchange of unions' support for Bilateral treaties (Oesch 2011).

As a result, the Swiss advocates of neoliberalism are still unsatisfied with the progress of the reforms and are keen on underlying the remaining rigidities of the Swiss Hybrid Model. In that respect, Gerhard Schwarz, director of the neoliberal think tank *Avenir Suisse* between 2011 and 2015, and one of the authors, with David de Pury, of the so-called "white books", which were manifesto promoting a neoliberal transformation of the Swiss model in the 1990s (Leutwiler et al. 1991; Hauser et al. 1996), declared in 2015:

> "It is absurd to believe that we live in a liberal society. The Swiss politico-economic system is mixed, as evidenced by the share of the state, compulsory levy, of 40%. The production of norms and reglementations grows exponentially. I am always surprised by the amount of people who still believe that we are in a neoliberal world. This is a *fake news.* The size of the state grows and the autonomony of the individual declines." ("Gerhard Schwarz: «Une Suisse néolibérale? C'est une «fake news» - Le Temps" 2019, author's translation)

On the other hand, the OECD still underlines the "barriers to free trade and competition in the domestic market" and the overdue of the pension reforms (OECD 2022, 12). For several years now, neoliberals have persisted with the idea that Switzerland is treading water when it comes to structural reforms, and that this immobility could well mark the end of the country's advantageous and privileged position. Nicolas Jutzet, liberal activist and project manager in the *Institut Liberté* (*Liberal Institute*) and co-creator of the media *Liber-thé*, deplores this supposed "wait-and-see" attitude, which he believes is the consequence of the erosion of the Swiss "militia spirit", the professionalization of Swiss politics and the increasing recurrence of social movements that threaten private property, freedom and trade as well as of individual responsibility (Jutzet 2023).

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[1]See for example the "seven good reasons" to privatize the electricity sector by the neoliberal Swiss think thank *Avenir Suisse* (Grünenfelder 2022).

1.2 Research question, theoretical framework and plan

The extent to which the Swiss model will complete its mutation towards a neoliberal model represents thus a fundamental economic, political and institutional issue for the years to come. A thorough and non-normative analysis of the path taken by the Swiss model since the crisis of the 1990s is thus duly needed and is behind the motivation of the present paper. What kind of social base made this neoliberal transformation of the Swiss socio-economic model possible? Is this social base stable enough to complete this transformation? A way to answer these questions is to explore the extent to which the formation of social blocs are influenced by different factors: socio-economic characteristics, institutions or even political mediation. The scope of the present analysis will be limited to the identification of the main Swiss social blocs and the extent to which their composition and evolution are influenced by socio-economic characteristics. The first part will conduct a long-term analysis of voting outcomes for the main Swiss political parties, political leaning and for a set of political cleavages, with a special focus on income and educational levels. Then, the second part will present the results of a latent class analysis (LCA) of the Swiss socio-political groups in the late 90s.

The aim of this essay is to conduct an analysis which would constitute a first step into a broader and comprehensive investigation of the political economy of institutional change in Switzerland. Far from the normative approach of mainstream economics, in which structural reforms simply constitute the sole and evident path towards its ideal model of perfect competition purged from rigidities, the methods and theory employed here are extensively based on the political economy of institutional change developed by Amable and Palombarini: the neorealist approach (2005, 2008).

1.2.1 Theoretical framework and concept definitions

The point of departure of the neorealist approach is the fundamental diversity of social expectations coming from the heterogeneity of the social structure. This diversity leads to a wide variety of social interests which are in perpetual contradiction and discord. Societies are thus characterized by a fundamental social conflict, which cannot be forever resolved but only temporarily regulated through the interaction between three spheres of social regulations: ideology, institutions and political mediation (Amable and Palombarini 2023).

Common socio-economic characteristics define socio-economic groups, which only partially translate into socio-political groups. The latter are groups which gather individuals sharing common social expectation regarding public policies and the desired socio-economic model. Regarding the relationships between socio-economic and socio-political groups, neorealism avoids the pitfalls of economic determinism. On the one hand, socio-demographic characteristics and hence socio-economic groups are partly captured by socio-political groups: agents with, for instance, low income level have more incentive to be in favour of pro-redistribution policies. However, they may not be in favor of redistribution if they are culturally persuaded by the

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dominant ideology to not follow their economic interests. Ideology thus mediates the translation of economic interests into explicit social demand. On the other hand, political mediation represents political strategies aimed at gathering socio-political groups into social blocs, which are thus never strictly homogeneous (Amable 2021).

Finally, social blocs compete in the political sphere with the objective to influence public policy towards the satisfaction of their social demands. A social bloc whose main demands are met and favored by public decision-making is the *dominant social bloc* (DSB). Social blocs whose demands are not favored by public policy are excluded from the DSB. In the neorealist framework, a political crisis corresponds to the collapse or destabilization of the DSB. Conversely, a stable existence of a DSB corresponds to a situation of *political equilibrium.* If the break-up of the DSB persists in time and no political strategy is successful in aggregating a new DSB, the crisis becomes *systemic* (Amable 2003; Amable and Palombarini 2005, 2008, 2023). The concept of political equilibrium should not let the reader think that the existence of a DSB leads to an unchanging stable situation. Moreover, periods of systemic crises can persist in time and last several decades, as in France (Amable 2017). The contrasts between Italy and France and the one side, and Switzerland on the other in terms of socio-economic and political institutions and political stability make the latter particularly interesting for the neorealist approach.

1.2.2 Switzerland: an interesting case study for the neorealist approach

For the analysis of social blocs and institutional change, Switzerland represents an interesting case study. The country is very different from France and Italy in terms of institutional and political institutions. Moreover, relative to Italy and France, which underwent deep periods of political and systemic crises in the last decades, Switzerland's political stability stands rather remarkably. This stability should, at first sight, not constitute a surprise: Switzerland ranks consistently top among the best performing economies in a wide variety of socio-economic indicators: GDP per capita, Human Living Index (HDI), or even the Economic Complexity Index (ECI)[2]. Switzerland's success and stability are often associated with the particularities of the country's political institutions.

For instance, in Lijphart's famous patterns of democracy, Switzerland stands out as the best example of consensual democracy, which is characterized by a proportional and diffuse distribution of political power, as opposed to the majoritarian system which tends to concentrate political power in the hands of the majority[3]. Lijphart explicitly argued that consensual democracies outperform majoritarian democracies in terms of governance, political stability

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[2]In 2018, Switzerland ranks third in terms of GDP per capita corrected for purchasing power parity among OECD countries (OECD 2019, 14). Switzerland had also the highest HDI in 2021 (Nations 2022, 272) and the second highest ECI in 2021 ("Country Rankings | OEC. OEC - the Observatory of Economic Complexity" n.d.).

[3]Lijphart described Switzerland as the "clearest consensual prototype" (Lijphart 2012, 245). Among all the criteria chosen in the author's typology, only the Swiss system of judicial review did not correspond to the consensual system.

and economic performance (Lijphart 2012). Further studies have nonetheless shown that the extreme Swiss case of consensual democracy is slightly becoming an average consensual democracy, due to growing political polarization (associated with the rise of the UDC), deregulation in industrial relations and diminishing cooperation between political actors (Vatter 2008).

If one considers confidence in government as a good indicator of political stability, and if one looks at the data provided by the OECD on that matter, Switzerland indeed stands out as one of the most stable countries in the OECD.

Political Stability across OECD countries
Trust in National Government: 2006–2022

Source: OECD
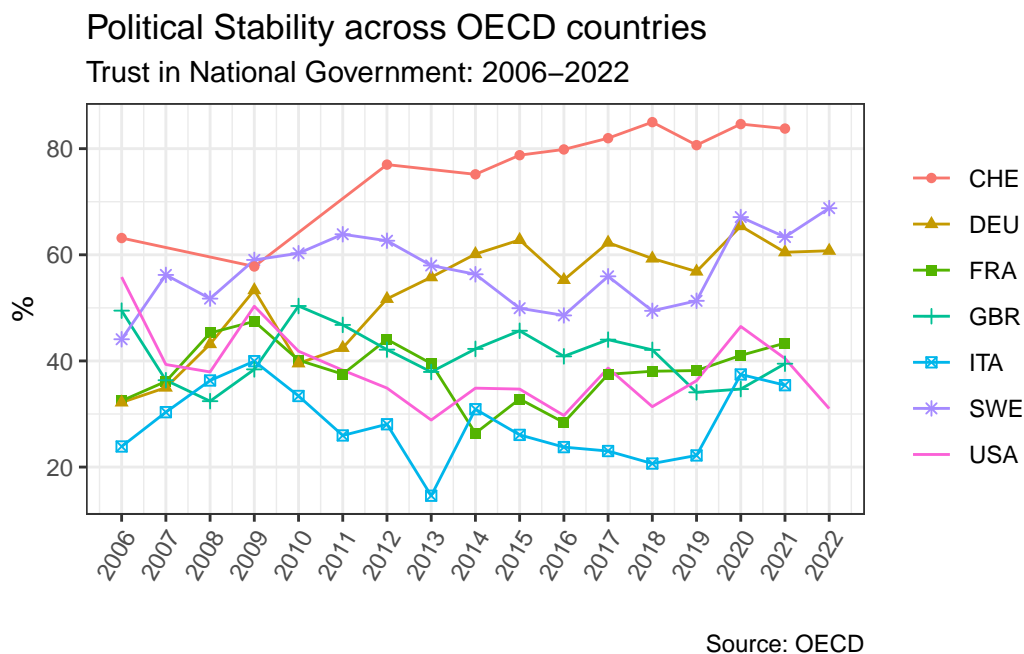
Figure 1.1: Share of people who report having confidence in the national government

Figure 1.1 shows political stability as measured by the share of respondents who declared having trust in national government in a sample of OECD countries from 2006 to 2022. Switzerland shows the highest level of trust among the countries shown in the figure. Swiss trust in government shows an upward trend since 2009 and the share of Swiss respondents declaring trust in government is consistently equal or above 80% since 2016. This stands in sharp contrast with Italy, France or the US, which show low level of trust. The latter can be interpreted as a reflection of the persistent political crisis in which France and Italy are plunged. The origins of the Italian crisis goes back to 1992 after the break-up of the country's DSB. The latter was constituted by large industrial firms, small firms and their employees, classes linked to rent and transfers and assisted classes whereas large firms' employees were excluded from the DSB. The existence of this DSB was made possible by public debt growth and high interest rates which satisfied the main policy demands of large industrial firms and small businesses (active industrial policy through public debt and not taxation) as well as assisted classes and

classes dependent on rent. However, as globalization and European integration put constraints on public debt growth in Italy, and as high interest rates reduced external competitiveness, this DSB collapsed due to the polarization of interests between large and small firms on the one side, and assisted classes, bureaucrats, classes linked to rent and transfers on the other side. (Palombarini 2001).

In France, the crisis intensified with the instability of the traditional left and right blocs, which used to govern alternately since the post-war period. The left bloc was constituted by the working class and the majority of public sector employees whereas the right bloc gathered self-employed, skilled, semi-skilled and white collars workers from the private sector, and farmers. The destabilization of the left and right blocs was the result of multiple factors such the relative decline of the working class, the economic crisis of the 1970s and European integration. The latter played a decisive role in the division of the left bloc between its neoliberal components, in favor of European integration as a tool to promote structural reforms in France, and its socialist branch still in favor of social and labor protection and state intervention (Amable, Guillaud, and Palombarini 2012; Amable and Palombarini 2014).

Since the break-up of the DSB in France and Italy, both countries experienced successive attempts by political leaders to carry a neoliberal project, with mixed results. These attempts failed at first during the 2000s and 2010s. In France, Chirac and then Sarkozy presidencies were unable to implement a complete neoliberal transformation of the French socio-economic model due to the resistance of the popular components of the right bloc. In Italy, Berlusconi failed due to similar reasons. However, the political strategy carried in France by Hollande and then Macron, which aimed to explicitly disregard the social expectations of the popular groups of the left bloc and extend the coalition to the center, by adopting a clear-cut neoliberal and pro-EU agenda, was successful in aggregating a new social bloc, the *bloc bourgeois*, uniting the wealthiest and most educated groups of both the left and right blocs, which is nonetheless unstable and fragile because of its restricted size (Amable, Guillaud, and Palombarini 2012; Amable and Palombarini 2018).

However, other data sources show a more contrasted picture of Switzerland's political stability. The *VOX* studies, which conducted post-ballot surveys after each referendum voting session, were harmonized in a cumulative dataset which offer long-run data from 1981 to 2016 (Hardmeier et al. 2022). A similar figure as Figure 1.1 can thus be made with a precise focus on Switzerland:

Figure 1.2 shows that Switzerland underwent contrasted periods of political stability and crises in the last decades. A first period ranging from 1981 to 1987 was rather stable despite some variation in trust. Figure 1.2 also depicts well the crisis of the 90s, which constitutes the most turbulent period in Switzerland's contemporary history. The crisis of the 1990s can be seen with the fall in trust from 65% in 1987 to a historical low level of 39% of Swiss respondents who declared to not have confidence in the federal government in 1995, three years after the rejection of the referendum for the adhesion to the European Economic Area (EEC). Swiss journalists, political observers, activist and scholars wrote extensively on this period which constitutes a rare case of deep political and economic crisis.

Confidence in Government
Switzerland, 1981–2016
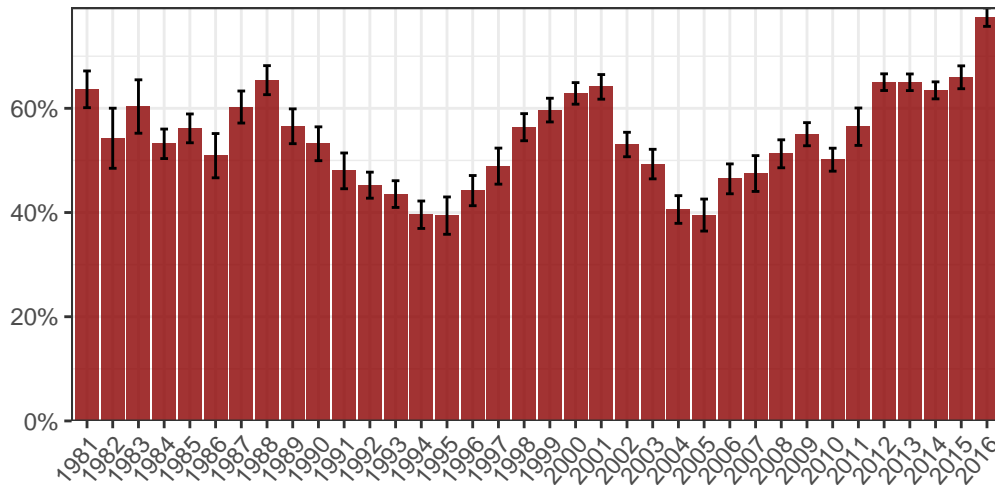
Source: VoxIt

Figure 1.2: Share of Swiss respondent trusting the government: 1981-2016. 95% confidence intervals.

Brunner and Sgier (1997) show that Swiss citizens lost a great deal of confidence in the government, the national parliament and their members during the 90s. This loss of confidence was accompanied by a loss of attachment to the nation and to the Swiss sense of identity, and a growing attachment to local authorities and communal institutions. Widmer and De Carlo (2010) draw similar conclusions, but also showed that this period marked a turning-point in the evolution of trusting behaviors: due to cohort dynamics, trust in institutions declined while interpersonal trust rose in the three waves of *World Values Survey* analyzed by the authors (1989, 1996, 2007).

José Ribeaud, famous journalist who was one of the first Swiss television presenters, published the dramatically untitled book *When Switzerland will disappear* (*Quand la Suisse Disparaîtra*) in 1998. Journalists like José Ribeaud or Pietro Boschetti generally emphasize the multiple political scandals that happened during the 1990s. The first scandal was the resignation of the Radical Elisabeth Kopp from the federal council, in which she was the very first woman member, after she secretly tried to protect her husband from judiciary investigations. The "secret files scandal" happened the same year: the mass system of surveillance of the federal authorities was revealed to the Swiss public. The "secret files scandal" revealed that one twentieth of Swiss citizen and one third of foreign residents were recorded in the public authorities' files. Last but not least, the dormant fund affair also broke out in 1995 and led to the Eizenstat report (1997) and the Bergier commission (1996), which strongly called into question the

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moral attitude and neutrality of Switzerland during World War II (Ribeaud 1998; Boschetti 2007).

The political crisis of the 90s was preceded by a severe economic crisis. The stock market crash of October 1987 and the Gulf crisis of 1990-91 ended the longest post-war expansion of the Swiss economy which lasted from 1976 to 1981. The Gulf crisis provoked an inflationary shock which led the Swiss National Bank (SNB) to raise the policy rate. The Swiss economy entered into recession in 1991 and economic stagnation persisted throughout the 1990s. This crisis, along with the crisis of the 1970s, marked the return of unemployment in Switzerland, which had disappeared during the post-war period, mainly because the country used to "export" a discriminated foreign labor force, a strategy which became impossible after crises of the 70s and 90s (OECD 1992).

Does the political and economic crisis of the 1990s constitute the sole period of instability in Switzerland? Figure 1.2 suggests that the early 2000s also represent a period of confidence crisis, as shown by the decline in trust from 2001 to 2005. The global 2001 recession which affected Switzerland surely played a role, but also various political and business events such as the bankruptcy of Swisswair (2001). The results of the 2003 federal election also profoundly disturbed the Swiss political scene: the Swiss People's Party (UDC) became the first party of Switzerland and gained another seat in the federal council at the expense of the Christian Democratic People's Party of Switzerland (PDC). Nonetheless, the upward trend in trust since 2005, which seems to be only slightly affected by the 2007 crisis and the following eurozone crisis, suggests that there is no notable confidence crisis since the 90s and early 2000s.

In view of the results shown in Figure 1.2, can the confidence crises of the 90s and early 2000s be interpreted as *political crises* in the sense given by the neorealist approach? A loss in confidence is not always synonym of political crisis if there is no break-up of the dominant social bloc. To answer this question, we thus need to, as a first step, identify what are the main Swiss social blocs and, secondly, assess their evolution in the last decades.

Until now, neorealism has been first and foremost applied to Italy and France. The present contribution seeks to expand the scope to the Swiss case by focusing on the links between political cleavages, the formation and evolution of social blocs, and socio-economic factors such as income and education.

The next section traces a short history of the Swiss social blocs. Then, the results from a series of regressions to analyze their evolution since the 1980s and test several hypotheses concerning the social bases of the transformation of political cleavages and party support are presented. Finally, the results from a latent class analysis using post-election survey data for 1999 are presented.

The research and analysis proposed here are new for the following reasons. First, the present research is, to the author's knowledge, the first to apply neorealist methodology and conceptual framework to Switzerland. Second, a long-term analysis of voting outcomes using post-voting survey data such as VoxIt has never been done in the literature, one possible reason being

researchers tend to focus more on post-election survey data. Last, this research is the first to conduct LCA using Swiss post-election survey data.

2 Social blocs, socio-economic groups and political divides in Switzerland

2.1 The traditional Swiss bourgeois and left blocs: historical perspectives

A striking feature of the history of Switzerland's social blocs is the persistence and resilience of a Liberal-Conservative bloc since the creation of modern Switzerland in 1848, a bloc that the existing literature on the topic calls the *bourgeois bloc*. Tracing the history of Switzerland's social blocs is therefore essentially a matter of tracing that of the bourgeois bloc. However, we shall see that tracing this history calls into question the extent to which, from a neorealist perspective, this bourgeois bloc can truly be described as bourgeois.

The history of the Swiss bourgeois bloc goes back to the creation of modern Switzerland. The religious cleavage between Radicals-Protestants modernizers and Catholic federalists, which was historically one of the most structuring conflicts in Switzerland, led to the Sonderbund civil war (1847) and the foundation of modern Switzerland in 1848. The federal institutions elaborated during and in the decades following the first Swiss constitution of 1848 can be interpreted as a social compromise between the losers of the Sonderbund civil war, the Catholic-Conservative coalition opposed to the centralization and modernization of the Swiss Confederation, and the victorious Radicals who were on average Protestants and bourgeois from urban areas (Sciarini 2023). However, these two blocs were highly heterogeneous and subject to internal contradictions.

From the outset of their movement, the Radicals were gathered by an unitary illusion: the pretention to transcend cleavages running through Swiss society and unite all its elements thanks to an encompassing goal: the modernization and centralization of the Swiss state. Far from homogeneous, the Radical bloc was a kaleidoscopic mass-movement constituted by the working class through the Grütli Union[1] and by an elite gathering entrepreneurs, bankers, journalists, lawyers and teachers, who were nonetheless divided over the role of the Swiss state.

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[1] Founded in Geneva in 1938, the Grütli Union was an important patriotic association that kept a long influence over the Swiss labour movement throughout the 19th century. The agreement between the Grütli and the Radicals stemmed from their convergent interest in a more centralized state. However, the Grütli Union progressively distanced itself from the Radicals, drawing closer to the Swiss Socialist Party as soon as the latter was founded (Müller 2010).

The political and economic thought of the Radical movement can be difficult to grasp, as its members could substantially differ from one canton to another. Overall, this movement showed a clear intellectual affiliation to the liberal economic and political thought of the 18th and 19th centuries. James Fazy, one of Geneva's leading 19th-century Radical politicians, was strongly influenced by the Physiocrates and Adam Smith. In 1821, the Genevan Radical published *L'homme aux portions*, an essay denouncing the French economic system as too rigid and containing too many barriers to free trade. This book was praised by Jean-Baptiste Say, who considered Fazy to be an intellectual who fully belonged to the liberal school of thought of his time (Mettral Dubois 2015, 55–56).

Parts of the Radicals, constituted by the Democrats, were partisans of a more centralized and interventionist state while another important branch, the liberal or "manchesterian" Radicals, were more federalist and in favor of laissez-faire. This divide between Democrats and Liberals was made explicit as early as 1852 over the issue of the nationalization of the Swiss railway industry. Supporters of a state-run railroad network, represented by for instance in Bern by Jakob Stämplfi[2] (1820-1879) and Johann Jakob Speiser (1813-1856), were opposed by liberal Radicals such as Alfred Escher (1819-1882) in Zurich, who were industrialists and bankers close to the private railway companies, when they weren't the owners themselves (Meuwly 2010).

Regarding the Catholic-Conservative bloc, the latter was from the start a cross-class coalition, constituted by, of course, the Catholic elite, but also by peasants, farmers, artisans and the commercial middle class from rural areas. These groups were united by Catholicism, but also by anti-modernism and federalism. This conservative coalition was the first to make extensive use of the constitutional and optional referendum (respectively 1848 and 1874) to block the modernization promulgated by the Radicals. While the Radicals were convinced that the idea of the Swiss nation would transcend divisions and social conflict, the Catholic-Conservative believed that religion, rather than the Swiss state, would endorse this role (Altermatt 1979).

As industrialization, proletarianization and unionization intensified in the late 19th, the hegemony of the Radical mosaic gradually shattered as the contradictions between the policy expectation of the popular and bourgeois bases increased. Parts of the democrats and of the working class joined or even founded socialist organizations. When the Swiss Socialist party was founded in 1888, it was a former Radical, Albert Steck (1843-1899), who wrote the party's first program, which provided for nationalizations and a transition to a planned and managed economy. Nevertheless, the former Radical Democrats reconverted into socialism such as Steck or Johan Jakob Treichler (1822-1906) were more influenced by anarchist and utopian

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[2]Major figure and leader of the Bernese Radicalism movement, Stämpfli co-founded in 1845 the Bernese journal *Berner Zeitung*. The same year, he led the Bernese Radicals to a failed corps francs expedition in Lucerne aimed at overthrowing the canton's catholic-conservative government. He then became an important member of the Bernese parliament and contributed to the canton's first Radical constitution in 1846. After the Sonderbund civil war, he was an active member of the national council and then of the federal council in 1854. He gained an international reputation after his key role in the *Alabama claims* affair of 1869, which marked the beginnings of Geneva's importance as an international center for conflict resolution (Summermatter 2020).

socialist thinkers than by Marxism. Steck explictly rejected the notion of class struggle and Marx's theory of value. Marxism made nonetheless its way into the Swiss Socialist Party in the early 1900s, as seen by the second programm of 1904 written by Otto Lange (1863-1936), who rewrote the program along more orthodox Marxist lines. This second programm marked a relative decline of the anarchists and cooperative ideas and the advent of Marxism in the Swiss Socialist Party, until the latter abandoned Marxism in the post-war period (Meuwly 2010, 118–19).

The creation of the Swiss Socialist Party prompted the Radicals to set up their own party, which was created in 1894 under the name of the Radical-Democratic party (PRD). This marked the beginning of the Radical shift towards liberal stances, which became clear-cut after the general strike of 1912, after which "a long-denied class conflict became evident" (Meuwly 2010, 49). Conversely, industrialization and class conflict represented an opportunity for an extension of the social basis of the Catholic-Conservative bloc towards the working class. The global development of a Catholic social doctrine, beginning with the encyclical *Rerum Novarum* (1881), was integrated by the Swiss Catholic-Conservatives, who then tried to attract parts of the working class (Altermatt 1979).

This polarization of class conflict around a left and right bloc became even more salient after the second general strike of 1918, which was the biggest strike and social protest in Swiss history. The latter was followed by the introduction of the proportional representation system: the Radicals lost their hegemony in the parliament and the Catholic-Conservatives, who meanwhile became the Christian-Democrats, and the Socialists became important political actors in the National Council. The Socialist Party (PS) consolidated a left bloc while the Radical-Democrats (PRD), the Christian-Democrats (PDC) and the Agrarians formed an alliance against the left.

This coalition between the PRD, PDC and Agrarians and its close links with business associations such as the Vorort (1870) led many observers to name this dominant coalition the "bourgeois bloc" (Mach 2007). The dominance of this bourgeois bloc is a fundamental feature of the Swiss hybrid model, along with the constrained policy capacity of the state and the tradition of self-regulation by economic actors and associations (Trampusch and Mach 2011, 43).

However, the extent to which this dominant bloc can truly be described as bourgeois must be questioned, in addition to the fact that there is no precise definition given in the literature. In the sense given by the latter (Meuwly 2008; Mach 2007; Trampusch and Mach 2011), the bourgeois bloc refers to a political coalition between the Radical-Democrats, the Christian-Democrats and the Agrarians (now UDC) and its close ties with business interest associations of both the export-oriented industries and domestic-oriented sheltered sectors.

This bloc is hence bourgeois only because it gathers right-wing parties and business interest associations, a definition which is rather narrow and can be misleading since it does not take into account the social basis of the bloc. Calling the right-wing coalition bourgeois ignores, for

instance, the fact that this bloc gathered some popular socio-economic groups such as small-business owners and peasants. In the sense given by Amable and Palombarini (Amable and Palombarini 2018), the bloc bourgeois observed in France corresponds to the aggregation of the wealthiest and most educated groups of the traditional left and right blocs. I argue that, from a neorealist perspective, the Radical bloc of the 19th century and the right-wing coalition of the 20th cannot be described as bourgeois and that other terms such as "Liberal-Conservative" or simply "Right" bloc are more suited.

In fact, until the post-war period, the evolution of the Swiss social blocs can thus be resumed as follows. From the middle to the late 19th century, the Radicals formed a strongly heterogeneous but dominant social bloc. This dominant social bloc was composed by the working class (mainly through the Grütli Union), and an urban elite composed by the most educated (journalists, lawyers, teachers) and the wealthy industrial bourgeoisie (entrepreneurs, bankers...). This DSB was united by their willingness to modernize the Confederation against the Catholic-Conservatives. A second period, from the late 19th to the second World War, marked the recomposition of the DSB and its transformation into a Liberal-Conservative bloc. Parts of the working class and of the democrats (educated elite) joined the emerging socialist-left bloc while the Christian-Democrats attracted part of the working class while being progressively incorporated into the DSB, along with the Agrarian party which represented the peasant and farmer classes.

Analyses of the first Swiss post-electoral surveys which were conducted in the 1970s show the heterogeneity of the Swiss "bourgeois bloc" and that the term bourgeois is not valid for the Right bloc as a whole. The social basis of the Liberal-Radical party was constituted by large employers/liberal professions and managers. The UDC relied heavily on small business owners' support while the PDC's social basis was rather cross-class (Rennwald 2014; Tawfik 2019). Therefore, of the three right-wing government parties, only the Liberal-Radical party's social basis can truly be described as bourgeois. Regarding the support for the Socialist party, the latter was neither a bourgeois nor solely a popular party, but a hybrid-class party whose social basis was constituted by socio-cultural professionals and production workers (Rennwald 2020).

The coalition between the Radical-Democrats, Christian-Democrats and Agrarians against the Left bloc took deeply roots into the Swiss socio-political system: it persisted during the post-war period and still shapes Swiss politics to some extent nowadays (Mazzoleni and Meuwly 2013; Meuwly 2010, 2008). A striking feature of the Swiss DSB is its persistence and resilience since 1848: even though this bloc underwent important transformations, especially after the introduction of the proportional system in 1918, it was always mediated by right-wing parties, first the Radicals and then an extended coalition with the Catholic-Conservative and the Agrarians. Despite its incorporation in the parliament and government, the Left bloc never truly became dominant in Switzerland.

To sum up, Switzerland's traditional social blocs crystallized into an opposition between two blocs, which is summarized in Table 2.1. On the one hand, the dominant social bloc, which

can be called Liberal-Conservative, gathered the large employers and owners of the big industrialized and internationalized firms, medium and small business owners and farmers, and skilled workers from the private sector. At the political level, this socio-political group was represented by business interest associations such as the *Vorort* (now *EconomieSuisse*), and the Radical-Democratic party.

The program of the Radical-Democratic and policy demands from the business interests associations linked to the large industrialized firms and large employees were to maintain low social protection, low taxation, no barriers to external trade and to promote free trade at the international level.

Alongside this group were the medium and small business owners producing essentially for the national market, and skilled workers (managers) from the private sector. The policy demands from the medium and small firms differed substantially from those of the large companies in terms of the degree of protection from international competition and public subsidies. Unlike the big corporations, small firms felt more threatened by external competition, and, since they produced mainly for the internal and rather small Swiss market, they tended to ask for protection and public subsidies.

Table 2.1: Social blocs in Switzerland during the 70s and 80s. Classification based on Rennwald (2014), Tawfiq (2019).

	Socio-political groups	Policy demands
Liberal-conservative bloc	• Large industrial, competitive and export-oriented firms	• Low employment protection
		• Limited redistribution
		• Low tax level
		• Free-trade
	• Medium and small domestic-oriented firms, farmers	• Low tax level
		• Low employment protection
		• Public transfers (subsidies)
		• Protection from international competition
	• Skilled workers from the private sector	• Lower taxes

	Socio-political groups	Policy demands
Left bloc	• Socio-cultural professionals, workers from the public sector	• State intervention
		• Increase in real wages
	• Production workers from the private sector	• Expansionary macroeconomic policy
		• Increase in real wage
		• Social and employment protection
		• Protection from external competition

On the other hand, the main social bloc excluded from the DSB was the Left bloc, constituted by socio-cultural professionals, workers from the public sector, and production workers from the private sector. These groups were mediated by the Swiss Socialist party, which was incorporated into the government during the Post-war period, but never really managed to dominate the parliament and government.

In its early days, the Swiss Socialist party had strong communist stances. Its second program (1904) had strong Marxist and anti-capitalist inspirations: it advocated nationalizations, collectivization, economic planning as ways out of capitalism. In the post-war period, the party moderated its program and became more a social-democratic reformist party. The main policy demands of the revised program of 1959 were focused on social reforms and expansionary policies within the capitalist framework: extending social protection; promote economic growth and anti-cyclical Keynesian macroeconomic policies and ensure full employment (Degen 2022).

2.2 Swiss social blocs and socio-economic factors: 1980-2016

How have the social bases of the Liberal-Conservative and Left blocs evolved since the 70s? How are the support for the main Swiss social blocs influenced by socio-economic characteristics? The objective of this section is to explore the composition of the Swiss social blocs in terms of socio-economic characteristics and assess their evolution since the post-war period.

A recent trend in political economy developed a tremendous analysis of the long run transformations of political cleavages, social blocs, and voting outcomes in almost all democratic countries around the world. The popularity of inequality studies, after the contributions of renown economists such as Atkinson (2015), Milanovic (2016) and of course Piketty (Piketty 2014), economists recently became interested in the problematic of social conflict and political cleavages. One possible explanation of this sudden interest is the inequality paradox:

increasing inequality and neoliberal reforms did not pave the way for growing support for re-distribution, taxation of top income and wealth owners, or for left parties. The same paradox could be applied to a "climate change paradox", that is, the fact that the growing emergency or environmental issues were not followed by increasing support for green parties. For instance, the Swiss federal election of 2023 marked the end of the "green wave" and a sharp decline green parties.

Those paradox thus gave way to a recent literature linking political cleavages and voting outcomes as function of a set of socio-economic factors, mainly income and education level. Trying to explore this inequality paradox, Piketty (2018) underlines the fact that, rather than bringing back class-based divide back to its post-war salience, the global rise in inequality since the 1970s was followed by the emergence of a new cleavage and a multi-elite party system. During the post-war period, the electoral support for the left parties in The US, UK and France was mainly constituted by popular classes with low income and education levels whereas right-wing parties were supported by high income and education voters. The popular element of the support for the left then transformed in the 1970-80s: left parties became the bloc of the highly educated, thus becoming the *brahmin left*, whereas the right kept the support of the wealthy (*merchant right*) (Piketty 2018, 2019). A further project, which gave birth to the World Political Cleavage and Inequality Database (WPID), showed that these transformations affected almost all Western democracies (Armory Gethin, Martinez-Toledano, and Piketty 2021).

Underlying the rise of a new cleavage in the 70s and 80s, Piketty and the WPID tackle a topic which is well-known in political science: the emergence of a cleavage centered around cultural values, that Piketty calls the "nativists-internationalists" divide, which cuts across the traditional class conflict and is the result of the increase in average education level and of globalization. This "cultural cleavage" has been given as many labels as it has analysts among political scientists.

Inglehart notably argued that strong economic growth and increase in standard-of-living experienced by advanced capitalist countries in the post-war period made the latter's populations less likely to hold "materialist" values, as better living conditions shifted their preoccupations and values towards what the author famously called "post-materialism" (R. Inglehart 1971, 1990; R. Inglehart and Flanagan 1987). Kitschelt then claimed that "increasing affluence, greater educational accomplishments, changes in the sectoral composition of labor markets, and again the welfare state" (Kitschelt 1994, 21) influence citizens' preferences on a new cleavage axis relatively independent from the economic (in Kitschelt's terms "distributive") divide: the "libertarian-authoritarian" cleavage. Preferences on this new cleavage, Kitschelt hold, are shaped by an interdependence between market and organizational experiences, or "job situations". For instance, less skilled employees in "object-processing job situations" are more likely to hold authoritarian values whereas: "individuals in people-processing occupations with higher education tend to be more libertarian" (Kitschelt 1994, 25).

A certain branch of the literature on political cleavages suggested that this cultural divide is not new, and that political space has always been reducible to two dimensions. Rather, it is

the meaning of the cultural divide that transforms over time Kriesi et al. (2006). In fact, the idea of a cultural cleavage goes back at least to Lipset and Rokkan (1967)'s seminal work on the origins of political divides in Western societies. Lipset and Rokkan (1967) notably argued that the national revolution (beginning with the French revolution) gave birth to two cleavages centered around cultural values: the conflict between the nation-state builders and the church, and the conflict between the promoters of the central state's culture and the culture of the peripheral regions' inhabitants. The industrial revolution, on the other hand, gave birth to two economic cleavages: a class conflict between capitalists and workers, and another class conflict between the urban and rural elites (or between the primary and secondary sector). The cultural divide therefore originally took the form of a religious conflict, which could totally or partially coincide with a center-periphery cleavage (Lipset and Rokkan 1967).

Kriesi et al. (2008) have emphasized the impact of globalization on the transformation of the cleavages' meanings. The threefold aspects of globalization, increasing international competition between economic actors; increasing migration; and integration to supra-national organizations, led to the emergence of a "integration-demarcation" divide between the "winners" of globalization, who are likely to include "entrepreneurs and qualified employees in sectors open to international competition, as well as all cosmopolitan citizens" and the "losers" of globalization which include "entrepreneurs and qualified employees in traditionally protected sectors, all unqualified employees, and citizens who strongly identify themselves with their national community" (Kriesi et al. 2008, 8). Exploring the socio-economic determinants behind this globalization divide, Teney, Lacewell, and Wilde (2014) showed that opponents of globalization are more likely to be unemployed, less educated and more attached to national identity. Other scholars have labelled this cleavage the "transnational cleavage" (Hooghe and Marks 2018) or the "universalism-particularism" cleavage (Bornschier 2010; Zollinger 2022).

Going back to Piketty's framework, the combination of this new cultural cleavage with the traditional class-based conflict draws a bi-dimensional political space in which four social blocs are possible: the brahmin left, also called the internationalist-egalitarian bloc which is on the left both culturally and economically; an internationalist-inegalitarian bloc (merchant right) on the left culturally but economically on the right; a nativist-inegalitarian bloc on the right culturally and economically; and a nativist-egalitarian bloc which is culturally conservative but economically on the left (Piketty 2018, 2019).

Testing the relevance of the brahmin left vs merchant right divide, Amable and Darcillon (2022b) offer different perspectives over the possible coalitions resulting from this bi-dimensional political divide. On the one hand, preference for redistribution decreases with both education and income levels. On the other hand, support for globalization issues (such as immigration) is not only positively influenced by education level, but also positively associated with income. Amable and Darcillon (2022b) suggest the possibility of a rapprochement between the brahmin left and the merchant right over policy preferences, giving birth to a bourgeois bloc uniting the wealthiest and most educated groups from the left and the right. Amable and Darcillon (2022a) show that the brahmin left vs merchant right divide has not

taken place in every country and that the classical popular left versus bourgeois right opposition is still relevant for many countries.

In this context of multi-elite party system and multidimensional political divides, Switzerland is an interesting case study. A widespread idea claims that the class-based cleavage always played a relatively minor role in Switzerland. In Switzerland, class conflict was always cut across a wide variety of other divides, the most important one being the religious cleavage (Lijphart 1979). Moreover, due to strong standard-of-living increase throughout the 20th century, Switzerland is also often considered as a forerunner in the emergence of this "cultural" cleavage, and in the precociousness and strength of the educational shift. Following Inglehart Silent Revolution's argument and empirical estimations, Switzerland shows relatively high level of post-materialism due to its high level of economic development (R. F. Inglehart 2009).

As a team part of the WPID project puts it, Switzerland is the country where "the shift of the higher educated towards the left has been the most dramatic" (Durrer de la Sota, Gethin, and Martinez-Toledano 2021, 4). During the post-war period until the 1990s, the left bloc (mainly the PS) was supported by low income and education voters while right-wing parties showed different patterns of class support, which call into question the extent to which this bourgeois bloc can truly be characterized as "bourgeois". Of the three parties constituting the bourgeois bloc, only one of them, the PRD-PLR party, had clearly a bourgeois composition since it is consistently supported by the most wealthy and educated groups since the post-war period. The PDC and the UDC cannot really be described as "bourgeois" since, according to Durrer de la Sota, Gethin, and Martinez-Toledano (2021), the support for the two parties was negatively associated with income and education. While this negative association tends to decline for the PDC, it became even more strong for the UDC since the 90s. After this period, the left bloc became "brahmin" in the sense that it gathered strong support among the most educated classes, while its popular support moved either into abstention or to the UDC.

This article by Durrer de la Sota, Gethin, and Martinez-Toledano (2021), shows that Piketty's brahmin left vs merchant right divide is partially valid in Switzerland: a Swiss brahmin left indeed exists through the Swiss Socialist Party. However this bloc do not face a merchant right, but rather a bourgeois bloc gathered by the Radical-Liberals and a popular bloc which support the UDC or do not support any party. Rather than being constituted by a brahmin left, a merchant right and a nativist bloc, Switzerland's tripolar political space is rather divided between a bourgeois bloc, a brahmin left and a popular bloc.

Table 2.2: The four possible social blocs based on a bi-dimensional political divide and income and education levels. This classification is based on Durrer de la Sota, Gethin, and Martinez-Toledano (2021) results (see their appendix). The term bourgeois bloc and this table were inspired by Amable and Darcillon (2022a).

Income/ Education	High level of income	Low level of income
High level of education	**Bloc Bourgeois** • PLR-PRD • Greens since 2011-2019 Policy preferences: • Against redistribution • Against state intervention • For equal rights & chances CH-foreigners	**Brahmin** • PS since the 90s • Greens until 2011-2019 Policy preferences: • For redistribution • For state intervention • For equal rights & chances CH-foreigner
Low level of education	**Merchant** • None Policy preferences: • Against redistribution • Against state intervention • For more rights and better chances for the Swiss	**Popular groups** • UDC • Abstention • PS until the 90s • Christian parties until the 90s Policy preferences: • For redistribution • For state intervention • For more rights and better chances for the Swiss

The transformation of party systems into a mutli-elite and tripolar political space came with important change in the structural basis of party support. Oesch and Rennwald (2010) show that, in Switzerland, the cultural cleavage is rooted in the class structure, and caused a realignment between class and party support. Before this shift took place, the traditional left

bloc politically represented by the Socialist Party was a hybrid-class coalition gathering socio-cultural professionals (teachers, academics, journalists…) and production workers, but also from technicians, clerks and service workers (Rennwald 2020).

This strong class heterogeneity of the Swiss left declined: an analysis of Swiss post-election surveys for 2003 and 2007 show that the Swiss left was deserted by production workers who directed their support for the Swiss People's party due to cultural issues (Oesch and Rennwald 2010). Using European Social Survey data for 2011 and 2015, Rennwald (2020) show that socio-cultural professionals remain the only "party preserve" of the Swiss left.

Oesch and Rennwald (2018) show that the rise of the radical-right and of the cultural cleavage transformed the patterns of class voting. The working class, or at least some of its constituencies such as production workers, are still attracted to the left due to their economic interests, but also by the far-right because of cultural issues, leaving socio-cultural professionals as the sole "stronghold" of the left. Small artisans and business owners are also divided between their support to the center-right and the far-right: their economic preferences make them closer to the center-right while their cultural preferences are closer to the far-right.

The empirical agenda of the present study is to test the validity and relevance of the literature reviewed above. More specifically, how are socio-economic factor shaping the composition of each Swiss social blocs? The objective of the empirical analysis conducted here is to test the following hypotheses regarding party support (PS), political leaning (PL), and issue positions (IP), derived from the contributions of the WPID project (Piketty 2018, 2019; Durrer de la Sota, Gethin, and Martinez-Toledano 2021; Armory Gethin, Martinez-Toledano, and Piketty 2021; Amory Gethin, Martínez-Toledano, and Piketty 2022); Oesch and Rennwald (2018); and Amable and Darcillon (2022b, 2022a):

1. *Brahmin left versus merchant right hypotheses*

   - BvsM1. The support for the left and left-wing parties should be negatively associated with education and income levels in the first time periods. The negative association with education should then decrease and become positive over time.
   - BvsM2. The support for the right and right-wing parties should be positively associated with education and income in the first time periods and the positive association with education should decrease over time.

2. *Bourgeois bloc hypotheses*

   - BB1. The support for redistribution and state intervention should decrease with education and income. Support for equal rights between Swiss citizen and foreigners should increase with education and income.
   - BB2. Support for right-wing parties and the right should increase with both income and education levels.

2.2.1 Data and empirical strategy

To test the hypotheses above, two types of data sources are especially relevant. The *Swiss Election Studies (SELECTS) cumulative dataset* is a harmonized dataset merging every Swiss post-election (federal assembly elections, which take place every four years) surveys from 1971 to 2019 (Tresch and Lutz 2022). Since SELECTS data are already drastically analyzed by the literature (for instance by Durrer de la Sota, Gethin, and Martinez-Toledano (2021)), I contribute to the existing research by analyzing another data source, the *VoxIt* cumulative dataset which harmonize every post-vote surveys from 1981 to 2016 (Brunner, Kriesi, and Lorétan 2017).

In each poll, respondents were asked which party they supported and their self-placement on the left-right axis on a Likert 10 points scale. The main dependent variables are dummy variables for party identification and political leaning computed from these two variables. Three other variables regarding issue position on public policies such as redistribution, state intervention and equal rights between Swiss citizen and foreigners are also considered.

The main independent variables are education and income levels. The variable "educ" is a qualitative variables on the highest achieved educational level with 6 categories ranging from primary school to university. It is important here to underline the peculiarities of the Swiss education system. Switzerland's education system is strongly based on vocational training. As a result, other education categories tend to be missing for a lot of year-periods of the dataset. To solve this problem, but also to simplify the data structure, years are aggregated into several time periods to avoid separation issues.

Figure 2.1 shows the proportions of each level of education and their evolution over time. In the 1980s, most of the Swiss completed either vocational training or compulsory school. The share of compulsory schooling declined over time, reflecting the overall increase in average education, as seen also by the increase in the share of university graduates. The share of vocational training declined over time, but is still the most widespread education level in Switzerland. For the regression analysis, the categories "university" and "higher specialized school" are merged together since the absence of the latter in the first two time periods could cause estimation issues. This does not pose a major issue since higher specialized schooling is rather similar to university in Switzerland.

Regarding income levels, the dataset contains two variables. The variable "nivmena" represents the houshold's standard of living in four categories (high, middle-high, middle-low, low) available from 1981 to 1991 whereas "revenu" is an income bracket variable in five categories available from 1992 to 2016. To harmonize these two variables in order to construct one single income or standard of living variable, I recode the variable "revenu" in order to make it similar to "nivmena" by grouping the income brackets categories 3 (from 5'001 chf to 7'000 chf) and 4 (from 7'001 to 9'000) into the "middle-high" category. This harmonized variable is used only in regressions for party support because political leaning and issue position variables are not
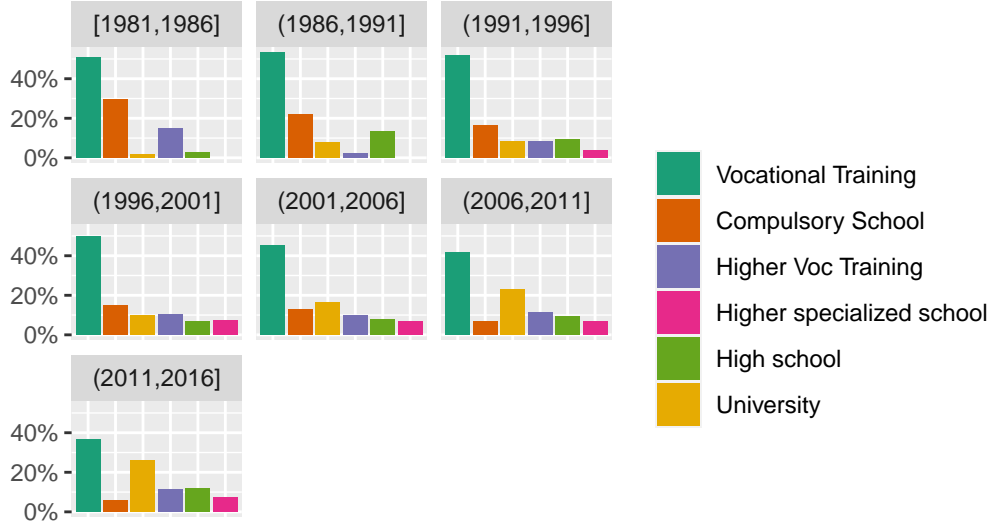
Source: VoxIt

Figure 2.1: Education Levels in Switzerland: 1981-2016

available until 1992 (thus for these dependent variables the variable "revenu" is used as an independent variable for income).

A series of binary logit regressions for party support, political leaning, opinion on redistribution, state intervention and equal rights between Swiss and foreigners are conducted. The results presented in this section come from the following model:

$$Y_{it} = \alpha + \beta_I I_{it} + \beta_E E_{it} + \beta I_{it} E_{it} + \gamma X_{it} + \eta_1 Year + \eta_2 Year I_{it} + \eta_3 Year E_{it} + \epsilon_{it} \qquad (2.1)$$

With I_{it} and E_{it} the income and education level of individual i in period t and X a vector of socio-demographic characteristics control variables which were available in the dataset for all time periods. The controls are for age (grouped into 4 categories), gender, religion, linguistic region (French, German or Italian), marital status and house ownership. $Year$ are dummy variables for the time periods and ϵ_{it} is the error term. The models include interaction terms between education and income as well as between income, education and time period in order to assess the temporal evolution of the correlation between the dependent and main explanatory variables. Income and Education are treated as categorical variables, with vocational training and low income as reference categories. The results are presented in the form of average marginal contrasts which allow to compare the difference in average predicted probabilities
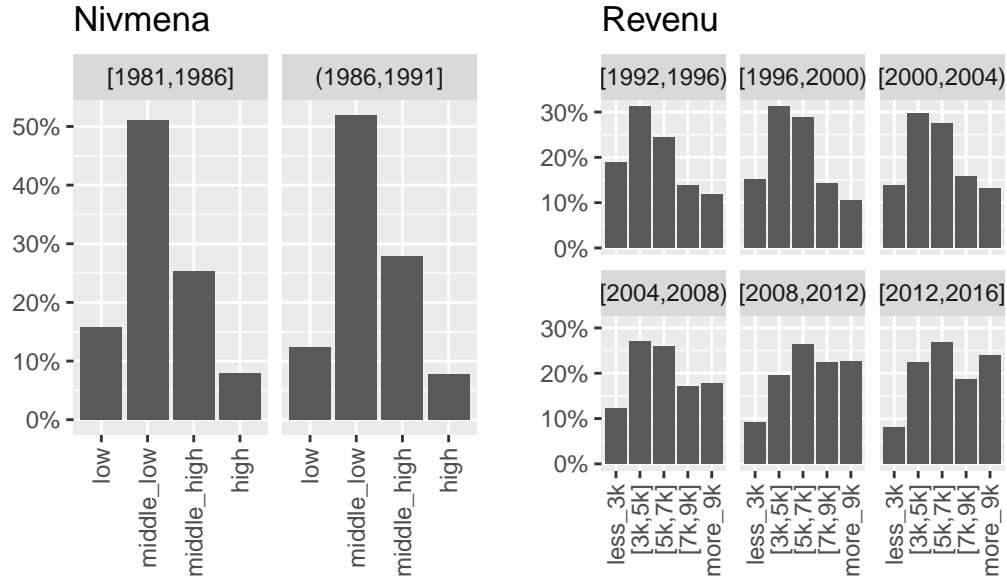
Figure 2.2: Descriptive statistics: variable nivmena and revenu

between groups of interests, in our case, between highest and lowest income groups and between university graduates and vocational training graduates.

Before running the model presented above (Equation 2.1), simple linear models regressing the dependent variables on years were estimated as a descriptive way to evaluate the proportions' overall time trends in the sample. The results (see the figures in the appendix) for party support show that Swiss citizen are most likely to not support any party, even though the proportion of no party support has declined over time. Among political parties, the Swiss Socialist party has the highest proportions of support, whereas The Radical-Democrats rank second until 2001, when the UDC becomes the second largest party in the sample. The difference between the estimated proportions for party support and actual party strength during the national elections suggests that UDC support is strongly underestimated in the sample (see Figure 2.6 and Figure 4.1 in the appendix).

Regarding political leaning, identification with neither the left nor the right increased until 2000 (50%) and then gradually declines 2016 (at around 30%). Left leaning has slightly increased over time while right leaning declined until 2000, and then increased until recovering in 2016 about the same percentage (slightly below 35%) as in 1988. As for issue positions, the percentage of Swiss citizen supporting income redistribution remains rather stable above 50%. The proportion regarding support for equal rights and chances for foreigners has overall increased above 50% since 1993, even though it fell below 50% from 2010 to 2014. Interestingly, the proportion for state intervention's support has increased rather significantly since the 90s,

but remains below 40% (see Figure 4.2 and Figure 4.3 in the appendix).

Figure 2.3 show average marginal contrasts for each party or no party support in each time periods. The results partially confirm those of Durrer de la Sota, Gethin, and Martinez-Toledano (2021) and hypotheses BvsM1 and BvsM2. First, the Swiss Socialist party (PS) used to be supported by relatively low education and income groups in the 1980s and became indeed a brahmin left party over time: the difference between the highly educated and vocational training graduates became positive in the second half of the 1980s and continued to increase in almost all time periods while the negative difference between the highest and lowest income groups decreased, indicating that the party's social basis became more educated and wealthier over time. However, the results show that the educational shift took place already in the 80s: university graduates already supported more the PS compared to vocational training graduates. This is an important result because it indicates that the PS became the party of the most educated in the 80s, before the economic and political crisis of the 90s and, most importantly, before the vote on the adhesion to the European Economic Area (EEA) in 1992, events which are often associated with the final stage of the educational shift and the PS's loss of popular support.

Second, the Liberal-Radical party (Radical-Democratic and Swiss Liberal Party before the latter merged in 2008) (PLR) shows a clear bourgeois basis for almost all time periods. The PLR is thus indeed the party of the wealthiest and most educated groups and is the only party that shows this pattern. However, the PLR seems to gradually become a merchant right party in the last time periods. In Durrer de la Sota, Gethin, and Martinez-Toledano (2021), another party, the Greens, also became bourgeois between 2011-2019, with the difference between the top 10% income and bottom 90% income voting Green becoming positive during this period while the difference between the top 10% and bottom 90% educated was positive since the 80s. The results shown in Figure 2.3 rather indicate that the Greens was a brahmin left party from 1981 to 2016.

Third, the results show that the Swiss People's Part (UDC) was a merchant right party whose social basis became popular both in terms of education and income levels. Before the 90s the party gathered the less educated, but also the wealthiest income groups (hence "merchant" in Piketty's terms). Here the results contrasts with those of Durrer de la Sota, Gethin, and Martinez-Toledano (2021) which show that the UDC was already a popular party gathering the less educated and poorest income groups in the 70s. Finally, we can see that popular groups, both in terms of education and income levels, are likely to not support any party relatively to the wealthy and most educated.

Figure 2.4 show average marginal contrasts for left leaning, right leaning and no leaning. Interestingly, we can see that right leaning used to be bourgeois in the 80s and 90s while left leaning used to be brahmin. Over time, left leaning became bourgeois and right leaning became merchant. In the 80s and 90s, left leaning was positively associated with education, but not with income level while right leaning was positively associated with both. The positive difference between university and vocational training graduates declined for right leaning whereas it stayed rather stable for left leaning, indicating that the most educated support the
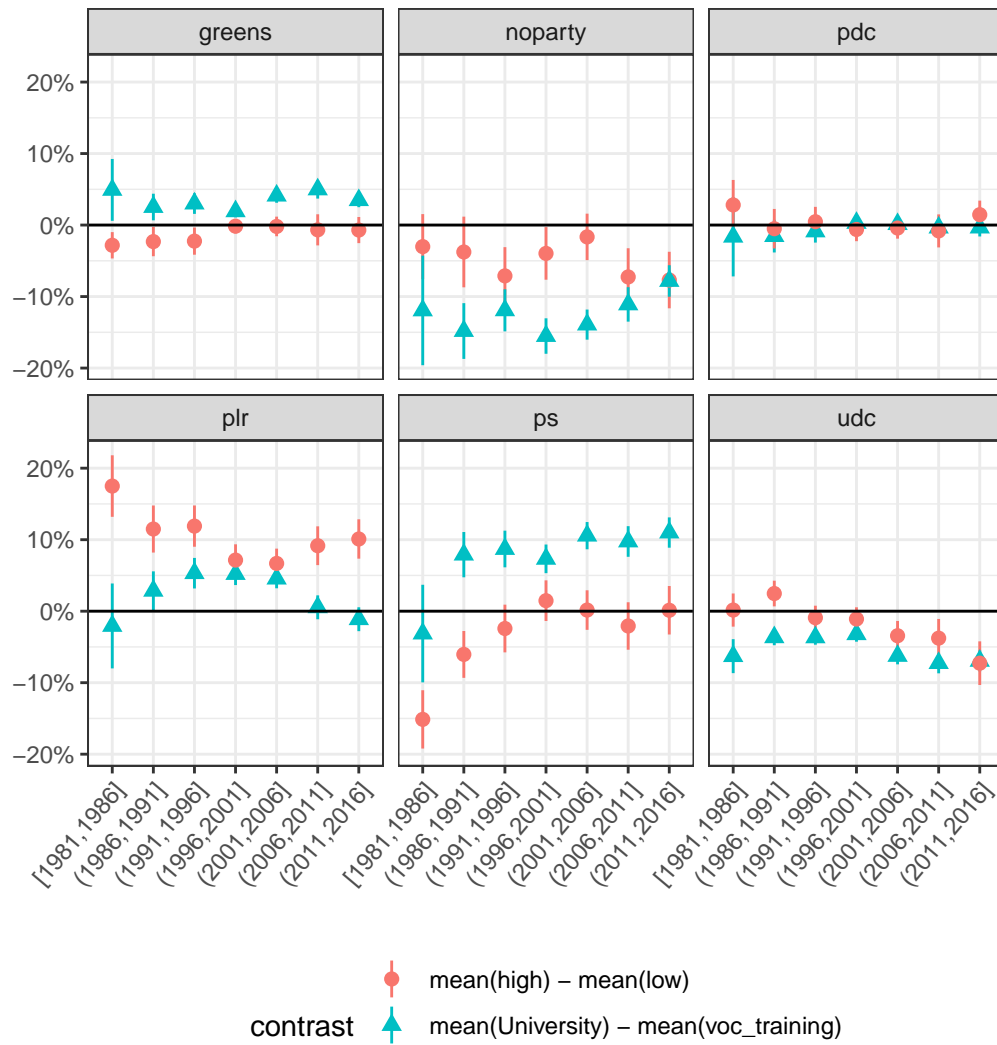
Figure 2.3: Party support in Switzerland: 1981-2016. Average difference in predicted probabilities between the highest and lowest income groups and between university and vocational training graduates.
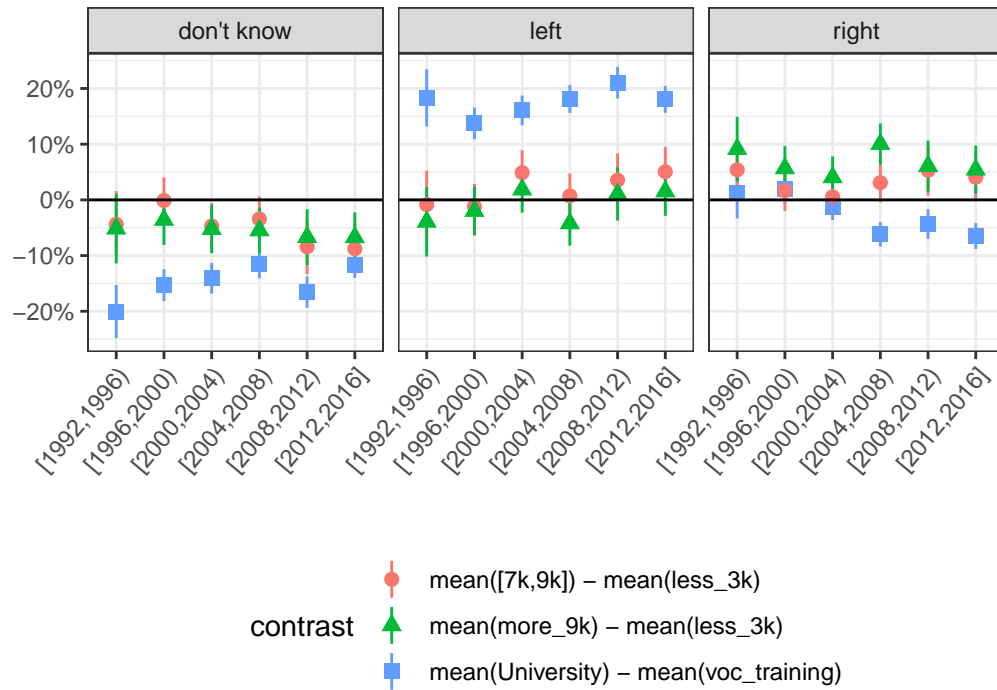
Figure 2.4: Political leaning in Switzerland: 1981-2016. Average difference in predicted probabilities between the highest and lowest income groups (less than 3000CHF per month vs more than 9000CHF), the second highest ([7'000chf-9'000chf]) and lowest income groups, and between university and vocational training graduates.

left for all time periods while their support for the right declined over time. Popular groups tend to not identify with either the left or the right.
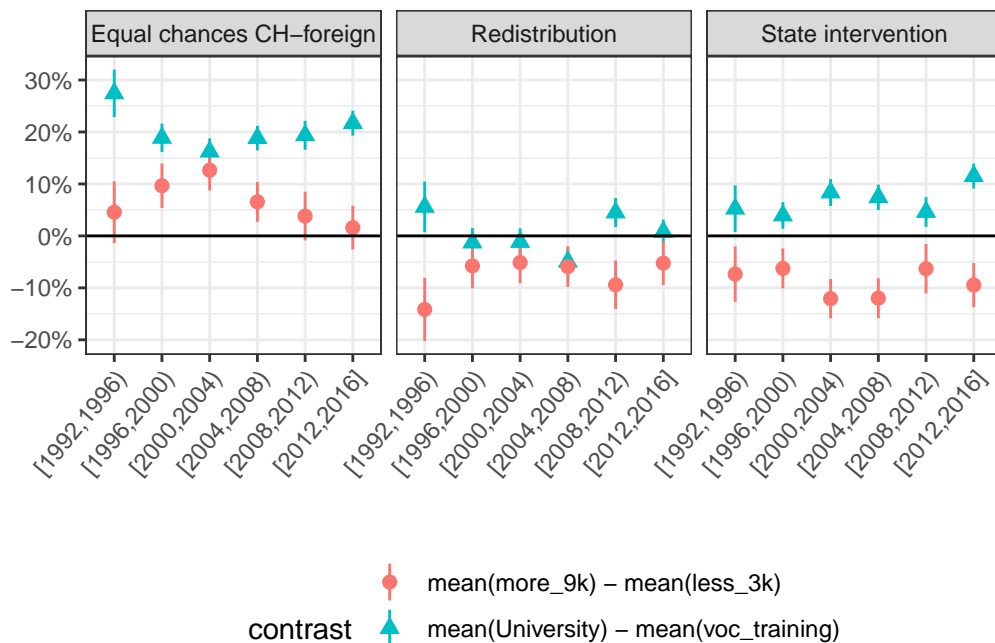
Figure 2.5: Opinion on several social issues in Switzerland: 1992-2016. Average difference in predicted probabilities between the highest and lowest income groups (less than 3000CHF per month vs more than 9000CHF) and between university and vocational training graduates.

Finally, Figure 2.5 show average marginal contrasts for issue positions regarding equal rights between foreigner and Swiss citizen, redistribution and state intervention. The support for equal rights is positively associated with both education and income levels. However, the positive difference between highest and lowest income groups tend to decrease since the 2000s, indicating a decline of the "progressive attitude" of the wealthiest income groups towards foreigners. The difference between income groups in the support for redistribution is negative for all time periods whereas the difference between education groups was declining from 1992 to 2008, but tend to increase since in 2008-2012, but is not significant in 2012-2016. Regarding support for state intervention, the difference between education groups and income groups are respectively positive and negative: university graduates tend to be relatively more in favor of state intervention and the highest income groups tend to be relatively against for all time periods, indicating a brahmin left vs merchant right divide over state intervention.

To sum up, the results overall confirm the brahmin left vs merchant right hypotheses, even more

than the results of the WPID project. The support for the Swiss Socialist party evolved from a traditional popular support towards a brahmin left support in the 80s. The results confirm the bourgeois composition of the PLR, since the latter seems to be gradually transforming into a merchant right composition since the beginning of the 2010s. The greens belong to the brahmin left since the 80s and there is no clear trend that the party evolved into a bourgeois party. Regarding the UDC, the latter used to be a merchant right party in the 80s, and evolved into a populist or, in Piketty's terms, a nativist party in the 90s. Thus, unlike Durrer de la Sota, Gethin, and Martinez-Toledano (2021) and the classification presented in Table 2.1, the social basis of the PLR seems to be transforming into a merchant right, while the Greens have kept their brahmin elements.

However, if one looks at political leaning on a left-right axis instead of party support, self-identification to the right used to be rather bourgeois in the 90s, and then went merchant afterwards. Self-identification to the left used to be brahmin in the 90s and even became bourgeois in recent time periods, if one looks at the difference in predicted probabilities between the upper-middle income and lowest income groups.

Finally, regarding policy preferences, preferences for equal opportunities and rights between foreigners and Swiss citizen for the highest incomes and the most educated seemed to converge until the mid-2000s, and have been diverging ever since. The divide over state intervention shows a brahmin vs merchant opposition in all time periods, with the highest income group being in favor of free market (relatively to the lowest income group) and university graduates being relatively more in favor of state intervention (relatively to vocational training graduates). The divide over income redistribution is less clear-cut than the state vs market divide: the cleavage appears to be brahmin vs merchant for some time periods (mostly 1992-1996 and 2008-20012), solely negatively correlated with income (1996-2004) or show a bourgeois vs anti-bourgeois opposition (2004-2008), with both the most education and wealthy being relatively opposed to redistribution.

Table 2.3: The four possible social blocs based on a bi-dimensional political divide and income and education levels. Results from regression analysis of VoxIt data

Income/ Education	High level of income	Low level of income
High level of education	**Bloc Bourgeois** • PRD-PLR from 1986 to 2006 **Policy preferences:** • For equal rights & chances Swiss-foreigners	**Brahmin** • Greens • PS since the 80s **Policy preferences:** | • For equal rights & chances Swiss-foreigners | • Support state intervention • Support redistribution in some periods
Low level of education	**Merchant** • PRD-PLR since 2006 UDC in 1986-1991 • Self-identification to the right **Policy preferences:** • Against state intervention • Against redistribution	**Popular classes** • UDC since the 90s • No party support **Policy preferences:** • Better rights & chances for the Swiss (until 2008) • Support redistribution in some periods (2004-2008)

Overall, the regression analysis conducted in this section, using a different data source from the WPID project offers a new way to describe the evolution of the Swiss version of the brahmin left vs merchant right divide, which is summarized in Table 2.3. However, this analysis suffers from several limitations.

On the one hand, one possible methodological issue of *VoxIt* dataset is the clustering structure of the data. Swiss citizen are clustered into several geographical levels, the most important ones being the cantonal and communal (district) levels. Switzerland is a highly decentralized and federalist country: every day political life as well as economic and political institutions can be substantially different across cantons. Every canton has its own party system and some Swiss parties, such as the *Lega Ticinessi* or *Mouvement Citoyen Genevois* (*Geneva Citizen*

Movement) exist only at the cantonal level. A possible methodological solution, which would take into account both the time periods and the cantons as levels in which data are clustered, was considered by the author: a series of multilevel logit regressions. However, the results from these multilevel regressions showed that the variations between canton were negligible and thus a more simple model, the one presented in this section, was chosen. Moreover, the results between the multilevel model and the model of this section give overall similar results.

On the other hand, the perspective adopted in this section is essentially a top-down approach, in which social blocs are derived from the relationships between party support, political leaning or policy preferences taken as dependent variables to be explained by a set of socio-economic characteristics. This is the method which is the most widespread in the literature, but it suffers from having an oversimplified view of social conflict, which is almost always reduced to two dimensions (the so-called cultural and economic divides). One important contribution of the neorealist approach is to underline the fact that social conflict is multidimensional (Amable and Palombarini 2023) and that a bottom-up approach can be more suited to analyze the formation of social blocs. The next section will therefore adopt this bottom-up approach which is specific to the neorealist approach by conducting a latent class analysis for the late 90s.

2.3 In search of the liberal-conservative and left blocs

The objective of the present section is to assess empirically the reconfiguration of the Swiss social blocs during the 90s. More specifically, the objective is to analyze how the dominant Swiss social bloc was able to recompose during the crisis using a bottom-up approach different from the previous section, and more aligned with the neorealist approach. One of the main limitations of the regression analysis of the previous section was to consider social groups as pre-defined based on different income and educational levels, or occupation, and only two cleavage dimensions.

As explained in the introduction, the neorealist approach starts from the diversity of social expectations emanating from the heterogeneity of the social structure. Socio-political groups could be endogenously defined based on the proximity of Swiss citizen's preferences regarding economic and public policies. A method that allow such procedure is latent class analysis (LCA). LCA is rarely used in the social sciences, but has recently been applied as part of the neorealist approach to infer socio-political groups based on a set of policy preferences variables from post-electoral surveys. It was first used by Amable, Guillaud, and Palombarini (2012) to identify socio-political groups in France and Italy. The analysis resulted in the identification of twelve groups for France, and seven for Italy. The analysis of France socio-political groups and social blocs was then improved in a subsequent paper by Amable (2021).

This section has for ambition to extend the contribution of Amable, Guillaud, and Palombarini (2012) and Amable (2021) to Switzerland by conducting LCA analysis using Swiss election

studies data. The methodology and approach used here closely follow the approach taken in Amable (2021).

2.3.1 The latent class model and estimation method

LCA allows to find a categorical structure from a set of categorical variables. The idea is that the Swiss population can be divided into different subgroups (socio-political groups given our theoretical framework), but that the latter are unobserved and can be indirectly estimated through a set of questions regarding policy preferences. The method employed here takes the following form:

$$f(y_i) = \sum_{x=1}^{K} P(x) \prod_{t=1}^{T} P(y_{it}|x) \tag{2.2}$$

With $f(y_i)$ the probability density function corresponding to a particular response pattern y_i. y_{it} is the response pattern of individual i to a set of T survey questions taken as indicators in the model. $P(X)$ is the probability to belong to a certain cluster given by the latent discrete variable x, with $1 \leq x \leq K$. The association between the latent class variable and the indicators T is estimated through binary logistic regressions (if the indicators are dichotomous) or, in our case, through multinomial logistic regressions (if the indicators have more than two un-ordered categories) (Vermunt and Magidson 2016).

An important step of LCA is model selection, that is, choosing the model with the appropriate number of clusters. The criteria chosen to determine the number of clusters in this section is a bootstrap likelihood ratio test, a test which, according to the simulation tests performed by Nylund, Asparouhov, and Muthén (2007), is the most suited compared model selection based on information criteria (AIC, BIC…). A series of models are thus estimated, increasing the number of clusters with each new model until the bootstrap likelihood ratio test showed no significance of adding a supplementary cluster to the model[3].

2.3.2 Estimation of Swiss socio-political groups in 1999: the 12 clusters model

For the LCA estimation, the Swiss post-electoral study of 1999 (Hardmeier et al. 2022) is chosen. The reasons behind this choice are technical, but first and foremost historical since the 90s represent a turning point in Swiss history and the evolution of the Swiss social blocs.

As explained in section 2.1, the Swiss socio-political landscape was structured around two social blocs before the 90s: a dominant liberal-conservative and a subordinate left bloc. These two blocs were able to cooperate in what Pietro Boschetti famously called the Swiss variant of the "historical compromise" between the Swiss left and right-wing parties. On the one hand, the

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[3]The models were estimated with the statistical software *LatentGOLD*.

PRD, PDC and Agrarian parties were willing to cooperate with the Swiss Socialist party and develop social security to a certain extent. On the other hand, the Swiss Socialist party abandoned its anti-capitalist stances and became a moderate and social-democrat reformist party aimed at promoting the creation of a Swiss welfare state, increase in real wage and promote the public sector and employment protection (Boschetti 2007). However, this compromise should not be overestimated, as the liberal-conservative bloc remained largely dominant, this compromise corresponded more to a "asymmetrical class compromise" (Kergomard 2022, 3) between the two blocs.

Since the break-up of the post-war Keynesian "historical compromise" between the traditional Swiss left and right-wing parties during the so-called "decade of all dangers" of the 90s (Boschetti 2007), the liberal-conservative and left blocs are undergoing important transformations, that some authors interpreted as various forms of latent political crises. The Swiss political scene is still marked by the rise of the Swiss People Party (UDC), one of the most successful far-right populist parties in Europe, and the Greens. The electoral success of the UDC is often associated with the destabilization of the liberal-conservative bloc, which entered during the 90s into a phase of "cacophonic" crisis (Meuwly 2008) which still persists in the early 2020s.
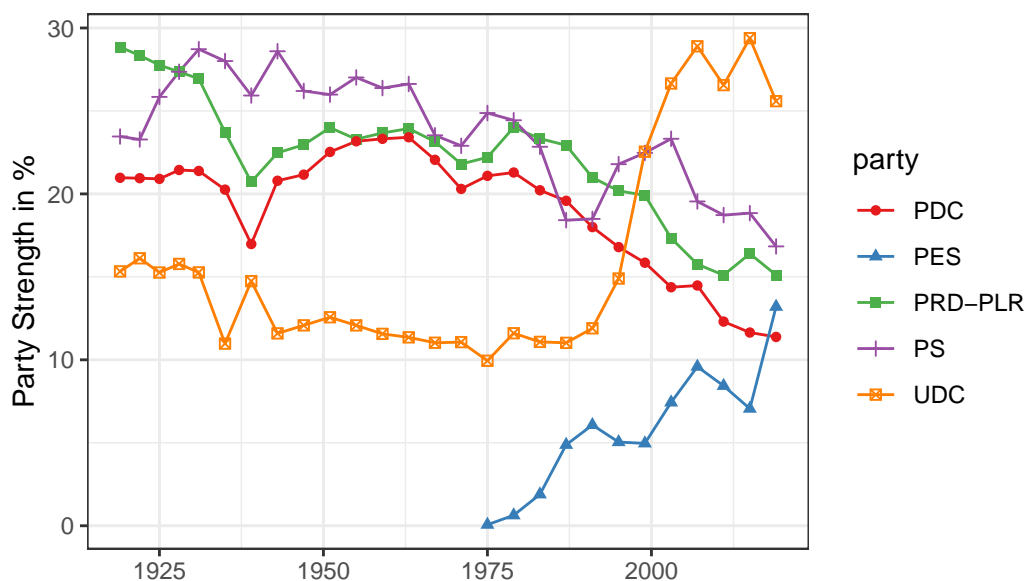
Source: OFS

Figure 2.6: Party Strength: 1918-2019

In fact, all the Swiss traditional main government parties, the Swiss Socialist Party (PS) The Radical-Liberals (PRD-PLR) and the PDC, are in decline since the post-war period (see Figure 2.6). On the right, the crisis can be seen through the fall in vote shares (apart from

the UDC); and the increase in party merges and re-configurations. In 2008, the Bourgeois Democratic Party (PBD) was created after a scission from the SVP. One year later, the Radicals, who created the Swiss modern state in 1848 and dominated Swiss politics until the first half of the 20th century, merged with the liberals to create the PLR. The PBD, whose creation disturbed the composition of a reputed unchangeable federal council, then merged with the PDC to create *Le Centre* (the Center) in 2021. The federal election of 2023 led to major historical change for the Swiss right. The PLR, very far from its former hegemonic domination of Swiss politics, is now in the fourth place in terms of low chamber parliamentary seats.

The crisis of the 90s marked an important turning point in the history and evolution of the Swiss social blocs described in Table 2.1. In fact, both the Liberal-Conservative and Left blocs were based on internal compromises between their socio-political groups which shattered under the pressure of structural and external pressures.

In the Liberal-Conservative bloc, the demands of the large export-oriented industries and sectors producing essentially for the internal market converged in terms of labor market flexibility, low employment protection and weak welfare state, but they differed in terms of commercial and industrial policies. In fact, the dualist structure of the Swiss economy, split between a protected sector producing for the domestic market and a competitive and export-led sector, implied some important contradictory policy demands within the bloc. This internal cleavage was reflected in the structure of the Swiss business interests associations, divided between those (like the *Vorort*) defending the large export-oriented industries and thus asked for liberal, free-trade commercial policies and those defending the farmers, medium and small firms, and small business owners producing for the internal Swiss market who asked for protection and subsidies. These contradictory demands were temporarily compatible during the post-war period and, as a result, reinforced the dual structure of the Swiss economy which combined a highly liberalized and free-trade exporting sector with a subsidized and highly protected internal sector (Mach and Eichenberger 2011).

However, as globalization, financialization and European integration intensified in the late 20th, the social groups attached to the interests of the internationalized Swiss industries gradually dissociated themselves from the groups attached to the internal sector. This rupture was made explicit by the publication of a series of "white-books" by political and economic actors defending the interests of the Swiss multinational corporations. These white books advocated a dismantling of the Swiss Hybrid model by promoting a series of neoliberal reforms. The main policy demands of the white books were to increase competition in the international sector by dismantling Swiss cartels, reform the taxation system, reduce employment protection and social security, and privatize the public sector (Mach 2007).

Furthermore, the Swiss post-electoral study of 1999 (Hardmeier et al. 2022) has the advantage of having enough observation (3258 records) and containing issue position variables with good enough qualities to infer socio-political groups quiet fairly. The ideal data set would be the one containing issue position variables which cover a good range of institutional areas, such as the one considered in Amable (2003): products market, social protection, labour market, the

financial system and the educational system along with general policy orientations (Amable 2021). Although the Swiss post-electoral study of 1999 is the most relevant for the present research, it is still limited by the questions available.

Nine questions were considered relevant to be taken as indicators. Of the nine questions, three concern economic policy. One question asked the respondent whether they were in favor of increasing or reducing social spending by the confederation, the second one whether taxes on high income should be increased or decreased, and the third one whether the respondent was in favor of more state intervention of for free market.

One interesting question is about the role of the Swiss army. The question asked the respondents whether they preferred a strong army or no army at all. This question is relevant regarding the historical context since the 90s represented a turbulent period for the Swiss army. Switzerland is known for its militia-based army and remains one of the few Western countries to retain this system.

But in 1986, the *Group for a Switzerland without an army* launched a popular initiative called *For a Switzerland Without an Army and an Overall Peaceful Political Stance* which, three years later, unexpectedly gathered 35.5% positive votes with a majority of yes in two cantons: Jura (55.5%) and Geneva (50.4%). These stunning results (no one would have expected such a high share of yes) greatly disturbed the government and the Swiss army, and the latter underwent a process of important reforms thereafter. Despite the rejection of this initiative, the debate over the role and the future of the Swiss army was still very heated in the late 90s and still frequently comes up in public debates nowadays[4].

Another question is about European integration. In surely one of the most important and disputed referendum in Swiss history, Swiss citizen were to vote on their country's adhesion to the European Economic Area (EEA) in 1992. As in other European countries, European integration became an important cleavage which destabilized both the liberal-conservative and left blocs. In the former, the UDC was the only major party to oppose the adhesion, while, in the latter, the Swiss Socialist party and labor unions were strongly in favor, with the exception of the Greens. This party was however divided over this issue, with a cleavage between the German-speaking cantons which strongly opposed the adhesion while the French-speaking cantons were in favor. The attitude towards European integration was included to assess the extent to which Switzerland displays a similar pattern than France in terms of European integration cleavage and the break-up of the traditional social blocs. As underlined by Amable and Palombarini (2018) and Amable (2017), European integration played an important role in the break-up of the traditional left and right blocs in France. The popular groups of the two blocs tended to opposed European integration while the most skilled and wealthiest elements were united around the pursuit of EU integration, which is one of the main policy demand of the bloc bourgeois, along with neoliberal reforms and progressive "cultural attitude".

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[4]For a short history and overview of the current challenges and of the role of the Swiss army, see Juilland (2012).

Two questions are about environmental issues. One of them was a trade-off question which asked whether the respondent was in favor of environmental protection or economic growth. The other one asked whether the respondent was in favor or against nuclear energy.

The two last questions concern "cultural" issues: attitude towards Swiss traditions and foreigners. The former asked the respondents whether they preferred Swiss traditions or modernity. The latter asked the respondents whether they were in favor of unequal rights between Swiss citizen and foreigners and better chances for the Swiss or equal rights and chances. Switzerland stands out for its high proportion of foreigners who have less rights than Swiss citizen. During the Post-war period, Switzerland became a country of immigration due to high sustained growth and labor shortages. Immigrants were mainly seasonal workers on temporary residence permits, with no right to family reunification and no voting rights. They were expelled as soon as their labor force was no longer needed. It is often said that, in this way, Switzerland maintain full employment by exporting its unemployed foreign labor force. As soon as the Swiss economy overheated in the late 60s, restrictive immigration policies were adopted, while certain rights for foreign residents were improved, under pressure from negotiations with neighboring countries (Piguet 2013). Including these two cultural issue positions variables are important to situate the socio-political groups on the so-called "cultural" cleavage, which may be important to assess the transformations of the traditional Swiss social blocs.

2.3.2.1 Description of the 12 clusters model

A series of models were thus estimated, increasing the number of clusters by one until the bootstrap likelihood ratio test indicated a lack of significance of adding a supplementary cluster to the model. By doing so, the 12 cluster model described below was selected.

Figure 2.7 gives a description of each cluster's relative weight, policy preferences and overall socio-economic characteristics. The largest cluster (cluster 1) represents 17.8% of the total sample. This cluster shows ambivalent policy preferences, but can be said to belong to the center-left since it supports an increase in social spending by the Confederation and also in taxes on high income, but remains supportive of free markets rather than state intervention. Cluster 1 is, in majority, in favor of European integration, but with an appreciable minority (around 40%) who is against. This cluster support equal rights and chances between Swiss citizen and foreigner, but is attached to traditions. Finally, it prefers environment protection over growth and is strongly against nuclear energy.

Cluster 2, the second largest group (13,7%) supports increase in social spending, higher taxes on high income and, conversely to cluster 1, supports more state intervention. It is also very much in favor of equal rights and opportunities for foreigners, questioning Swiss traditions, and is also pro-environment and against nuclear energy. Cluster 3 is similar to cluster 1 regarding higher taxes, but has a higher proportion of members in favor of state intervention, and differs in its preference for cutting social spending, for being more in favor of a strong army and is

Cluster	Weight	Policy preferences	Characteristics
1	17,8%	For increase in taxes on high income (HI), but supports free markets; no clear opinion on Swiss army; rather pro-EU integration; but with an appreciable minority of; anti-EU supporters (40%); for equal chances Swiss-foreigners; defend traditions; pro-environment; against nuclear energy.	Rather middle-aged and old; female; low income; middle education; skilled and unskilled workers; Protestants; middle/small city ;German and Italian-speaking.
2	13,7%	For increase in social spending; for higher taxes HI; for state intervention; for no Swiss army; strongly pro-EU integration; for equal chances Swiss-CH; question traditions; pro-environment; against nuclear energy.	Young; female; high income; high education; managers, socio-cultural specialists; French-speaking; big city; Catholics and Atheists.
3	13,4%	Against social spending; for increase in taxes on HI; free-market but with an appreciable minority (40%) in favor of state intervention; for a strong Swiss army; against EU integration; for better chances for the Swiss; defend traditions; pro-environment; against nuclear energy.	Rather old; female; low income; low and middle education; unskilled workers; craft specialists; self-employed; Protestants; German and Italian-speaking; countryside; middle/small city
4	12,4%	For increase in social spending; for increase in taxes on HI; rather free-market; divided over Swiss army; pro-EU integration; for equal chances Swiss-foreigners; pro-environment; against nuclear energy.	Young; female;middle-high income and education; skilled workers and managers; German and French-speaking; Catholics or no religion; big city.
5	7,1%	Against social spending; for increase in taxes on HI; for free markets; for strong army; against EU-integration; for better chances for the Swiss; defend traditions; divided over environment vs growth; pro-nuclear energy.	Rather old; retired; male; middle-low income and education; Protestant; German speaking; farmer; craft specialists, skilled and unskilled workers; countryside, middle/small city.
6	6,9%	Pro-EU integration; for equal chances Swiss-foreigners; rather defend traditions; pro-nuclear energy.	Old; high income; high education; vocational training; managers; skilled employees; retired; German-speaking; big city.
7	6,9%	For higher taxes on HI; for strong army; pro-EU integration; for equal chances Swiss-foreigners; defend traditions; against nuclear energy.	Old; retired; low income; low education; Protestant; craft specialists; skilled and unskilled employees; managers; German-speaking; countryside, middle/small city.
8	5,9%	For increase in social spending; for higher taxes on HI; for no army; pro-EU integration; for equal chances Swiss-foreigners; question traditions; pro-environment; against nuclear energy.	Rather young; female; high income; high education; skilled workers; managers; socio-cultural specialists; German and French-speaking; big city.
9	4,9%	For reducing taxes on HI; for reducing social spending; strongly for free-markets; for strong army; against EU-integration; rather for better chances for the Swiss; defend traditions; divided on environment vs growth; pro-nuclear energy.	Old; retired; male; high income; rather high education; Protestant; self-employed; German speaking; countryside, middle/small city
10	4,9%	For reducing social spending; for reducing taxes on HI; strongly for free markets; for a strong army, but with an appreciable minority of no army supporters (37%); for EU-integration; for equal chances Swiss-foreigners; question traditions; rather for economic growth; pro-nuclear energy.	Young; male; high income; high education; managers; skilled workers; self employed; German-speaking; big city.
11	3,3%	Against EU-integration; for better chances for the Swiss; defend traditions; pro-environment; against nuclear energy.	Old; female; low income; middle-education; skilled and unskilled workers; Protestant
12	2,6%	For increase in social spending; for increase in taxes on HI; Undecided or in favor of state intervention; undecided on EU integration; rather for no army; for better chances for the Swiss; defend traditions; pro-environment; against nuclear energy.	Rather old; female; low income; low education; unskilled workers; socio-cultural specialists.

Figure 2.7: Cluster description

more skeptical about EU integration. It differs from cluster 1 by being also against foreigners' equal rights and chances.

Cluster 4 is rather similar to cluster 2, but what sets it apart is its preference for free markets over state intervention. Cluster 5 members are rather similar to cluster 3, but they are more divided over environmental issues and they strongly support nuclear energy.

Cluster 6 has no clear opinion on social spending, rather supports higher taxes but not state intervention. It supports EU integration, equal chances and rights for foreigners, rather wants to defend traditions. It has no preferences between environment vs economic growth, but is supportive of nuclear energy.

Cluster 7 supports higher taxes on high income, is rather for free markets, supports a strong army, the defense of traditions, better chances and rights for the Swiss and wants to stay out of the EU.

Cluster 8 is the only cluster which, like cluster 2, is strongly in favor of a Switzerland without an army. Conversely to cluster 2, cluster 8 is nonetheless less in favor of state intervention.

Cluster 9 and 10 broadly support neoliberal economic policies (lower taxes high income, cut social spending, for free markets). However, cluster 9 is more in favor of a strong Swiss army, against EU integration and equal rights and chances for foreigners. It also supports nuclear energy.

Cluster 11 expresses no clear preferences, except for EU integration (stay out), attitude towards foreigners (better chances for the Swiss) and taxes on high income (rather in favor, but also strongly undecided).

Like cluster 2, cluster 12 supports left-wing economic policies, environment protection and is also rather against the army. However, this cluster prefers better chances for the Swiss and to defend traditions.

The socio-economic characteristics for each group can be precised by taking into account variables that have not been considered as active indicators, but can define some general characteristics within each cluster by comparing the proportions within the clusters with the overall proportion of the sample.

Cluster 1 members are older than average. This cluster has an over-representation of women, lower income groups[5], and of low to medium levels of education. Cluster 2 is the youngest (on average seven years old younger than the total average). It also has a strong proportion of female (59% percent compared to an overall proportion of 54%) and of high income groups. University graduates are over-represented in cluster 2, with a proportion of 24% compared to an overall proportion of 11%. Cluster 2 is predominantly French-speaking, with a proportion of 48% (compared to an overall proportion of 28,6%), non religious and urban.

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[5]The income variable considered here is the gross monthly income of the household.

Cluster 3 is composed of female, low income groups, vocational training and compulsory school graduates.

The wealthiest clusters in terms of income are (in descending order) cluster 10, 9, 8, 2 and 6. Cluster 10 is especially wealthy and well educated, with 33,8% of its member belonging to the highest income group (overall proportion of this income bracket is 16,8%) and a high representation of university and higher vocational training graduates. Cluster 9 is also wealthy is well educated, but less than cluster 10. Clusters 9 and 10 also have strong proportion of males and self-employed. The poorest clusters are cluster 3, 7, and 12. Farmers and skilled workers and retired people are strongly represented in cluster 7.

2.3.2.2 Aggregation into social blocs

The political identification of each cluster can be assessed by regressing cluster membership on left-right self-identification recoded into 4 categories; left (0 to 2), center-left (3 and 4), center (5), center-right (6 and 7) and right (8 to 10). To do so, the so-called three-step approach is used: after clusters are defined (step one), each cluster membership posterior probabilities are assigned to every observations (second step). Then, cluster membership can be regressed on a set of independent variables.

Table 2.4: Influence of political leaning on cluster membership. Z-values under the coefficients.

Cluster	left	center-left	center	center-right	right	None
Cluster1	-0.0271	0.4828	0.2234	-0.2535	-0.6839	0.2583
	-0.0597	1.4995	1.3690	-1.1519	-2.1424	1.1803
Cluster2	3.1214	1.9111	-0.7612	-1.6362	-2.3589	-0.2763
	9.1630	5.3302	-2.3489	-2.9775	-2.3495	-0.7574
Cluster3	0.2644	-0.7633	-0.1006	-0.1656	0.4410	0.3241
	0.7572	-1.8100	-0.6333	-0.8591	2.2251	1.5559
Cluster4	0.3272	0.8300	0.2504	-0.2133	-0.6826	-0.5118
	0.7231	2.4968	1.3977	-0.8846	-1.9357	-1.5973
Cluster5	-0.1359	-2.0355	0.2906	1.3051	1.5587	-0.9829
	-0.1728	-1.2100	0.6547	3.0170	3.5388	-1.0007
Cluster6	0.2601	0.5912	-0.4009	0.0860	-0.4908	-0.0455
	0.6378	1.7593	-2.0335	0.3902	-1.5132	-0.1609
Cluster7	-1.6914	-1.0160	0.3984	0.5314	0.9229	0.8547
	-1.0123	-1.1901	0.9976	1.2877	2.1931	1.9749
Cluster8	2.2133	1.8517	-0.0838	-1.8001	-1.9080	-0.2731
	5.4676	4.5680	-0.2418	-2.0603	-1.7500	-0.5442
Cluster9	-2.8885	-2.0592	0.2001	1.7354	2.4815	0.5307
	-3.3971	-0.9671	0.3585	3.5232	5.0548	0.8262
Cluster10	-1.8303	-0.5535	0.4436	1.3870	1.2790	-0.7256

	-1.0935	-0.6185	1.0190	3.2793	2.8615	-0.9934
Cluster11	-0.5298	0.0617	0.1817	-0.0119	0.1514	0.1468
	-0.6618	0.1359	0.7093	-0.0369	0.4421	0.3760
Cluster12	0.9167	0.6991	-0.6416	-0.9643	-0.7104	0.7005
	2.1249	1.7442	-1.9228	-1.8149	-1.2369	2.2273

The results are presented in Table 2.4 and can be resumed as follows: clusters 2, 8 and 12 lean to the left; cluster 4 to the center-left; cluster 10 to the center-right and clusters 3, 5, 7 and 9 to the right.

Cluster 2 constitutes the core of the left bloc: its members have strong left-wing preferences regarding all issue positions, which broadly correspond to the program of the Swiss Socialist party during the 90s.

Cluster 8 could also easily fit into the left bloc since it only differs from cluster 2 by its less pronounced support for environment protection (although it is still against nuclear energy). The left could also include cluster 12, which has however a dissenting position vis-à-vis EU integration and cultural issues (more conservative). All these three clusters combined, the left bloc constitutes 22.3% of the sample, which approximately corresponds to the party's share of the vote of the Socialist party in the 1999 elections (22.5%). An extended left bloc would include cluster 1 (17,8%) and/or 4 (12,36%), which support social expenditure, taxes on high income and EU integration, but are more in favor of free markets and of defending traditions.

The heart of the bloc bourgeois is constituted by cluster 10 since it is the only cluster being strongly in favor of neoliberal policies, European integration, and which has broad "culturally progressive" preferences while being socially composed by the highest income and educational groups. This cluster is however rather limited in size (4.9%) and isolated from the other right-wing clusters regarding EU integration and cultural preferences. Cluster 9 is the core of the conservative branch within the Liberal-Conservatives: it is in favor of neoliberal policies while being against EU integration and equal rights and chances for foreigners, and strongly for defending traditions. Its preferences are close to clusters 3 and 5 and these three clusters could easily be aggregated into a neoliberal and conservative bloc that would represent 25.7% of the sample. This bloc could also include cluster 7 (7%), which is however more divided over neoliberal policies (it is for instance strongly in favor of increasing taxes on high income).

2.3.2.3 Discussion of the results

The results of the LCA analysis using post-election survey data for 1999 shows how the post-war left and liberal-conservative blocs recomposed during the 90s. The left bloc seemed less destabilized than the liberal-conservative bloc. The former, which includes clusters 2 and 8 (19.67%) had two alternative strategies to extend the bloc by including other socio-political groups. One the one hand, it could have tried to include cluster 12, which has left-wing economic policy preferences, but is limited in size (2,6%) and is less in favor of EU integration

and more conservative culturally. On the other hand, it could have tried to include more center or center-left groups like clusters 1 and 4, but at the expense of dampening its economic program by being more in favor of free markets to meet their expectations.

This strategy would have corresponded to a Swiss variant of the "Third Way", incarnated by Tony Blair's Labour Party in the UK and Schröder's SPD in Germany. In the years following the 1999 national elections, this strategy was attempted by certain members of the Socialist Party, most notably by Simonetta Sommaruga, who published in 2001 the *Gurten Manifesto, for a new and progressive SP policy*. This manifesto, co-authored with the political scientist Wolf Linder, the historian Tobias Kaestli and Henri Huber, was a clear call for a Third Way in Switzerland. However, the Third Way was never fully endorsed by the Swiss Socialist Party, at least compared to other countries (Oesch and Rennwald 2010, 347). The cluster analysis performed here shows why a third way strategy was a dead end for the Swiss left, considering the diversity of socio-political groups' preferences. To attract clusters 1 or 4, the Swiss Socialist Party had to be more conservative not only economically, but also *culturally* since these clusters are in favor of defending Swiss traditions. This strategy would have hence come with the risk for the Socialist Party to lose its fundamental base constituted by cluster 2. The other strategy, attract cluster 12, seemed more feasible, as the left bloc could have attracted this cluster thanks to their proximity in terms of economic issues.

The divisions within the liberal-conservative clusters marked a shift in power balance within the bloc: the core of the bourgeois bloc was very limited (5%) whereas the neoliberal, conservative and anti-EU clusters (3, 5, 10) became a majority within the bloc. This shows that the neoliberal strategy based on the revitalization program and combined with a pro-EU and culturally progressive agenda was not sustainable as its social base was not large enough. This could explain why Switzerland, under the leadership of the UDC, rapidly adopted some forms of conservative neoliberalism.

3 Conclusion

The aim of this study was to explore the social foundations of the transformation of Swiss capitalism since the 1980s. The rationale was to show that the neoliberal transformation of the Swiss hybrid model had to be founded on a strategy of institutional change supported by a sufficiently broad social base.

The crisis of the 90s did not mark a break-up of the Swiss dominant social bloc, but a re-composition and a change in the power balance within the bloc itself. While the crisis did not destabilized the left bloc that much, the right bloc, that I named "liberal-conservative" throughout this work, underwent important process of change.

In fact, the social bases of the political parties representing the liberal-conservative bloc, the PRD-PLR, PDC and UDC, changed substantially since the 80s. Unlike Durrer de la Sota, Gethin, and Martinez-Toledano (2021), who showed that the social base of right-wing government parties stayed rather stable since the 70s, the results presented in the previous section show that, while the UDC's social basis was rather merchant in the 80s, it transformed into a popular base during the 90s. Furthermore, the social basis of the PRD (then PLR) used to be very bourgeois until the 2010s, period after which this social base showed trends towards an evolution into a merchant right. Interestingly, my results are more supportive of the brahmin left vs merchant right divide hypothesis than the WPID's own results for the Swiss case. However, if one looks at political leaning instead of party support, the left appears to be bourgeois in the sense that it is supported by the upper-middle income groups and by university graduates, while right self-identification evolved into a merchant right pattern.

Then, an analysis closer to the methods and conceptual framework of the neorealist approach was carried out through a latent class analysis for the late 1990s in order to assess more closely the recomposition of the left and liberal-conservative blocs during the crisis. The LCA results show...

As stated in the introduction, the present work is a first attempt to employ neorealist framework and methodology to study institutional change in Switzerland. The present work suffers from several limitations that could be improve in further studies. First, the time span ranges from 1981 to 2016. Although the time frame can't really go back further than 1981, it could be extended to most recent years. This could be done, for instance, by analyzing the *VOTO* studies (the successor of the *VOX* studies since 2017) which collected post-voting survey data from 2017 to 2020. This analysis of the *VOTO* studies could be complemented, as done in this work, by a latent class analysis using more recent data, for instance the SELECTS 2019 panel study, which offers even better questions than the SELECTS post-election data for 1999 used

in the previous section. Overall, more recent data analysis would be a good complement to the present study.

Finally, the present work tends to overlook the crucial role of ideology and political strategies. On the one hand, the different political strategies aimed at promoting a new Swiss socio-economic model, both on the left and the right, deserve to be more carefully explored. On the other hand, ideology, both at the Swiss and international levels, could explain the transformations of these strategies, but also the transformation of the social basis of the different blocs.

4 Appendix
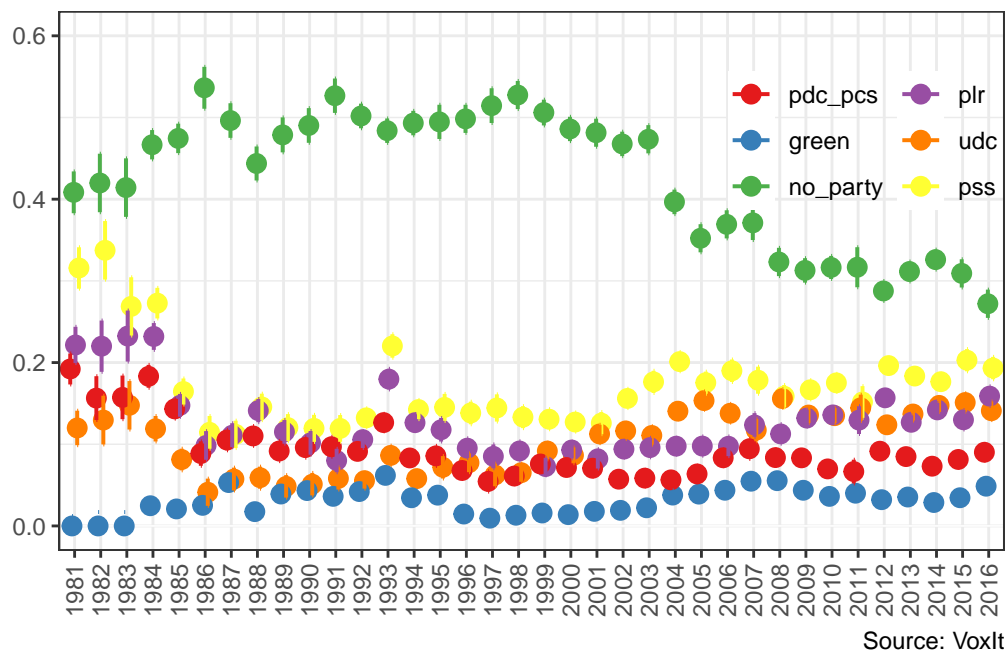
Figure 4.1: Proportions of Swiss citizen's support for the country's main parties: 1981:2016

Table 4.5: Model selection: 12 clusters model

Cluster	L^2	L2 bootstrap p	-2LL Diff	-2LL Diff bootstrap p	Entropy R^2
1-Cluster	14058.41	0.000	NA	NA	1.0000
2-Cluster	12111.01	0.000	1947.3954	0.000	0.6441
3-Cluster	11173.20	0.006	937.8165	0.000	0.6299
4-Cluster	10932.57	0.060	240.6254	0.000	0.6043
5-Cluster	10708.48	0.192	224.0898	0.000	0.5925
6-Cluster	10584.08	0.234	124.4011	0.000	0.5788
7-Cluster	10467.74	0.324	116.3432	0.000	0.5933
8-Cluster	10389.37	0.356	78.3647	0.000	0.6009
9-Cluster	10318.10	0.332	71.2689	0.000	0.6084

10-Cluster	10259.10	0.290	59.0079	0.004	0.6058
11-Cluster	10208.58	0.264	50.5185	0.014	0.6035
12-Cluster	10160.79	0.264	47.7854	0.034	0.6107
13-Cluster	10114.68	0.268	46.1100	0.066	0.6293

Table 4.1: Binary logit regressions: party support (PS, Greens, No party)

	PS	Greens	No party
(Intercept)	−1.509***	−3.693***	0.222**
	(0.101)	(0.265)	(0.069)
incomefhigh	−1.054***	−1.407*	−0.251*
	(0.181)	(0.568)	(0.104)
incomefmiddle_high	−0.309**	−0.555+	−0.289***
	(0.113)	(0.313)	(0.077)
incomefmiddle_low	−0.012	−0.361	−0.082
	(0.102)	(0.278)	(0.070)
educationfcomp_school	−0.083	−1.244***	0.202**
	(0.103)	(0.367)	(0.068)
educationfhigher_voctraining	0.507***	0.249	−0.412***
	(0.137)	(0.335)	(0.102)
educationfmaturity	−0.345	1.296**	−0.629***
	(0.228)	(0.398)	(0.163)
educationfUniversity	−0.156	1.302**	−0.651***
	(0.261)	(0.406)	(0.188)
annee_cat(1986,1991]	−0.919***	0.327	0.287**
	(0.137)	(0.309)	(0.092)
annee_cat(1991,1996]	−0.601***	0.211	0.119
	(0.120)	(0.295)	(0.083)
annee_cat(1996,2001]	−0.940***	−1.191**	0.248**
	(0.124)	(0.372)	(0.082)
annee_cat(2001,2006]	−0.667***	−0.295	−0.118
	(0.118)	(0.305)	(0.082)
annee_cat(2006,2011]	−0.751***	0.148	−0.237*
	(0.143)	(0.319)	(0.101)
annee_cat(2011,2016]	−0.645***	−0.169	−0.355***
	(0.143)	(0.350)	(0.103)
Num.Obs.	68 501	68 501	75 456
AIC	60 477.9	18 126.4	96 941.1
BIC	61 208.6	18 857.2	97 679.6
Log.Lik.	−30 158.935	−8983.191	−48 390.555
RMSE	0.37	0.17	0.47

+ p < 0.1, * p < 0.05, ** p < 0.01, *** p < 0.001

Table 4.2: Binary logit regressions: party support (PRD-PLR, PDC-PCS, UDC)

	PRD-PLR	PDC/PCS	UDC
(Intercept)	−2.489***	−1.364***	−2.501***
	(0.137)	(0.132)	(0.151)
incomefhigh	1.262***	0.267	−0.008
	(0.165)	(0.179)	(0.209)
incomefmiddle_high	0.969***	0.068	−0.033
	(0.142)	(0.143)	(0.165)
incomefmiddle_low	0.382**	0.005	0.023
	(0.139)	(0.133)	(0.153)
educationfcomp_school	0.129	0.034	0.012
	(0.130)	(0.124)	(0.135)
educationfhigher_voctraining	0.301	−0.344	−0.672**
	(0.189)	(0.211)	(0.212)
educationfmaturity	0.442+	−0.420	−1.473**
	(0.241)	(0.312)	(0.461)
educationfUniversity	−0.014	−0.306	−1.505*
	(0.287)	(0.333)	(0.607)
annee_cat(1986,1991]	−0.698***	−0.619***	−0.670**
	(0.187)	(0.171)	(0.228)
annee_cat(1991,1996]	−0.417**	−0.737***	−0.064
	(0.161)	(0.159)	(0.182)
annee_cat(1996,2001]	−0.668***	−0.970***	0.171
	(0.165)	(0.160)	(0.172)
annee_cat(2001,2006]	−0.575***	−1.039***	0.965***
	(0.164)	(0.164)	(0.161)
annee_cat(2006,2011]	−0.316+	−0.597**	0.947***
	(0.189)	(0.188)	(0.185)
annee_cat(2011,2016]	−0.281	−1.132***	1.267***
	(0.185)	(0.200)	(0.183)
Num.Obs.	68 501	68 501	68 501
AIC	46 836.1	34 929.2	41 848.2
BIC	47 566.8	35 660.0	42 579.0
Log.Lik.	−23 338.037	−17 384.620	−20 844.110
RMSE	0.31	0.27	0.30

+ p < 0.1, * p < 0.05, ** p < 0.01, *** p < 0.001

Table 4.3: Binary logit regressions: political leaning

	Left	Right	No leaning
(Intercept)	−0.946***	−1.231***	−0.070
	(0.116)	(0.125)	(0.106)
income[3k,5k]	−0.238+	0.256+	0.006
	(0.129)	(0.136)	(0.117)
income[5k,7k]	−0.003	0.151	−0.094
	(0.133)	(0.143)	(0.123)
income[7k,9k]	−0.014	0.368*	−0.259+
	(0.150)	(0.159)	(0.143)
incomemore_9k	−0.068	0.540***	−0.380*
	(0.157)	(0.162)	(0.151)
educationfcomp_school	−0.258+	0.238	−0.003
	(0.150)	(0.145)	(0.125)
educationfhigher_voctraining	0.370*	0.081	−0.368*
	(0.160)	(0.169)	(0.148)
educationfmaturity	0.975***	0.090	−1.049***
	(0.185)	(0.211)	(0.197)
educationfUniversity	0.908***	0.070	−1.019***
	(0.142)	(0.157)	(0.151)
annee_cat[1996,2000)	−0.245+	0.079	0.127
	(0.133)	(0.141)	(0.120)
annee_cat[2000,2004)	−0.493***	0.102	0.298*
	(0.135)	(0.142)	(0.120)
annee_cat[2004,2008)	−0.146	0.204	−0.044
	(0.134)	(0.144)	(0.123)
annee_cat[2008,2012)	−0.468**	0.275+	0.158
	(0.155)	(0.161)	(0.139)
annee_cat[2012,2016]	−0.335*	0.490**	−0.099
	(0.147)	(0.151)	(0.133)
educationfmaturity × annee_cat[2012,2016]	−0.462**	−0.033	0.584***
	(0.165)	(0.183)	(0.177)
educationfUniversity × annee_cat[2012,2016]	0.033	−0.378**	0.352*
	(0.127)	(0.135)	(0.138)
Num.Obs.	45 278	45 278	45 278
AIC	52 978.1	52 450.1	58 592.7
BIC	53 693.2	53 165.1	59 307.8
Log.Lik.	−26 407.061	−26 143.026	−29 214.367
RMSE	0.45	0.44	0.48

+ p < 0.1, * p < 0.05, ** p < 0.01, *** p < 0.001

Table 4.4: Binary logit regressions: issue position

	Redistribution	Equal R&C CH-foreign	State intervention
(Intercept)	0.151	−0.447***	−1.053***
	(0.094)	(0.095)	(0.106)
income[3k,5k]	0.002	−0.022	−0.112
	(0.103)	(0.105)	(0.116)
income[5k,7k]	−0.100	0.099	−0.329**
	(0.109)	(0.111)	(0.125)
income[7k,9k]	−0.362**	0.158	−0.220
	(0.126)	(0.128)	(0.145)
incomemore_9k	−0.650***	0.217	−0.400*
	(0.134)	(0.136)	(0.157)
educationfcomp_school	0.162	−0.307**	0.246*
	(0.110)	(0.111)	(0.121)
educationfhigher_voctraining	−0.180	0.330*	−0.128
	(0.137)	(0.136)	(0.160)
educationfmaturity	−0.011	0.952***	−0.016
	(0.169)	(0.173)	(0.188)
educationfUniversity	0.100	1.276***	0.347*
	(0.129)	(0.137)	(0.139)
annee_cat[1996,2000)	−0.023	−0.154	0.015
	(0.106)	(0.108)	(0.120)
annee_cat[2000,2004)	−0.105	−0.003	0.397***
	(0.104)	(0.106)	(0.116)
annee_cat[2004,2008)	0.051	0.167	0.508***
	(0.108)	(0.110)	(0.119)
annee_cat[2008,2012)	0.033	0.079	0.696***
	(0.124)	(0.125)	(0.132)
annee_cat[2012,2016]	0.123	−0.076	0.599***
	(0.118)	(0.119)	(0.127)
educationfmaturity × annee_cat[2012,2016]	−0.528***	−0.607***	0.102
	(0.152)	(0.155)	(0.171)
educationfUniversity × annee_cat[2012,2016]	−0.210+	−0.276*	0.221+
	(0.117)	(0.124)	(0.129)
Num.Obs.	52 418	52 434	52 537
AIC	71 130.4	69 248.4	64 698.3
BIC	71 857.5	69 975.5	65 425.6
Log.Lik.	−35 483.212	−34 542.213	−32 267.140
RMSE	0.49	0.48	0.46

+ p < 0.1, * p < 0.05, ** p < 0.01, *** p < 0.001
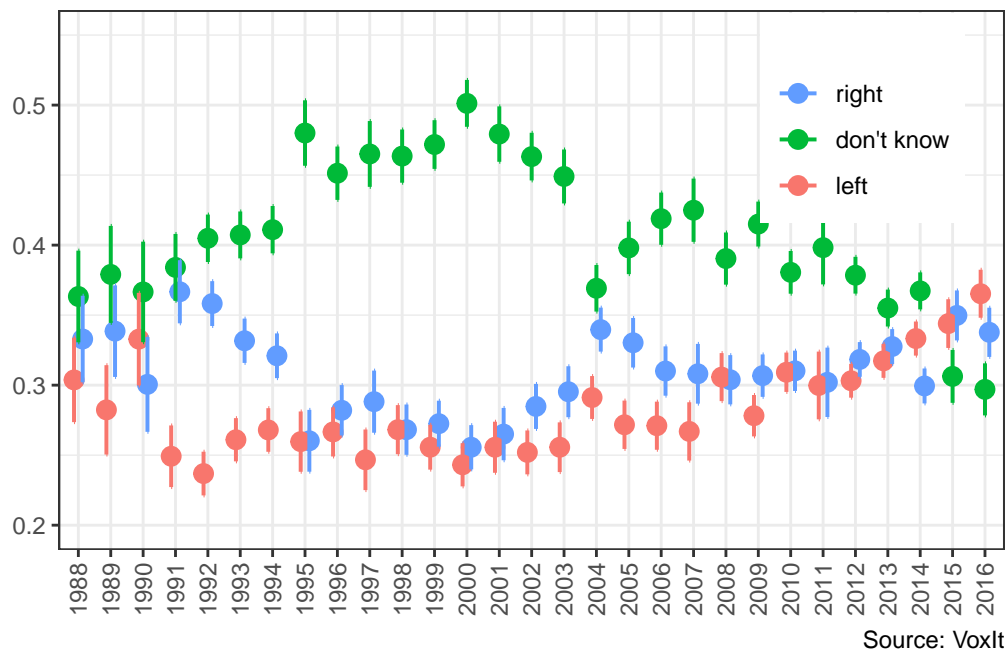
Source: VoxIt

Figure 4.2: Proportions of Swiss citizen leaning for the left, the right or neither left or right: 1988-2016
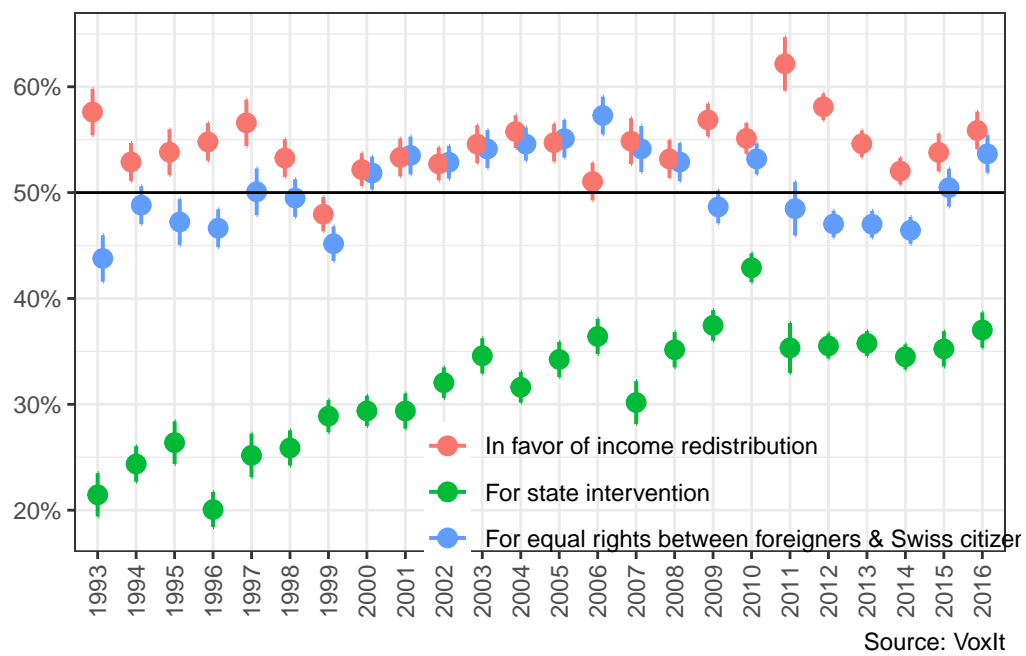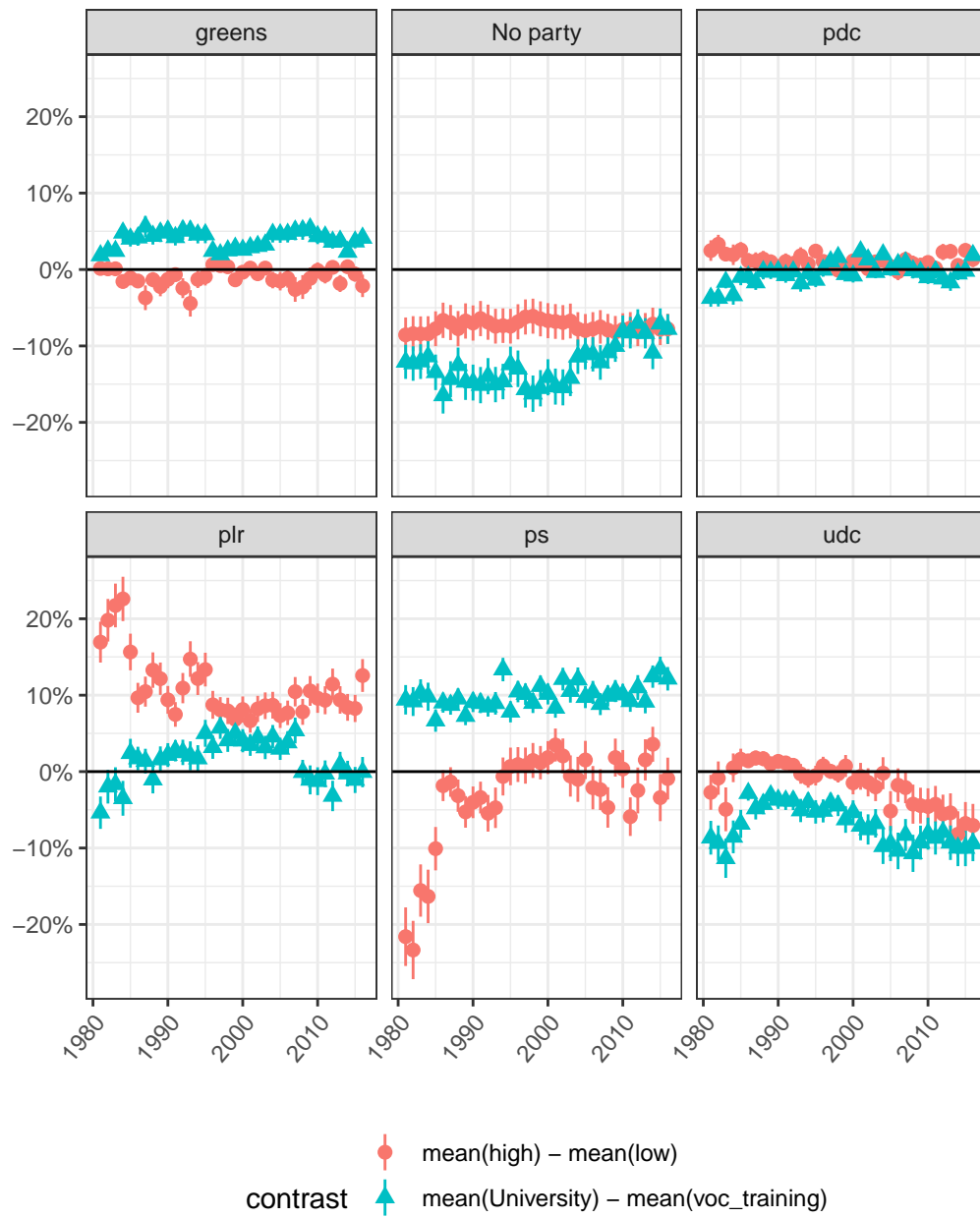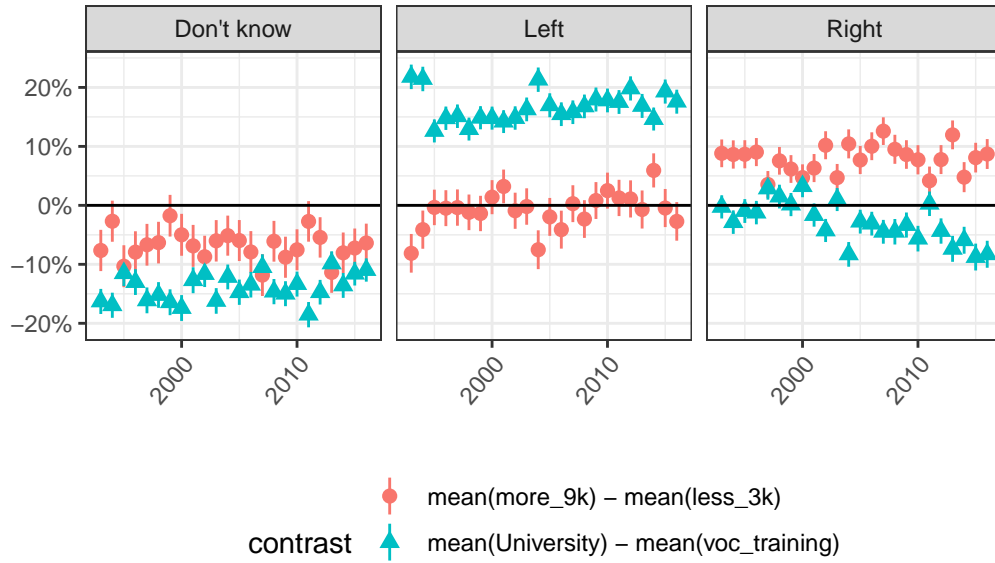
Figure 4.3: Proportions of Swiss citizen supporting state intervention, equal rights & chances for foreigners, and redistribution: 1993-2016
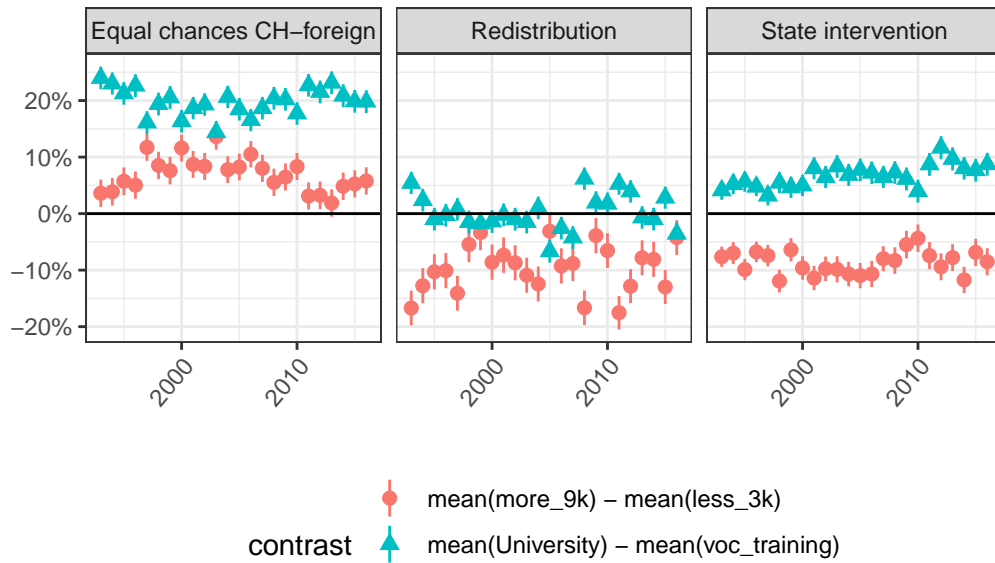
Figure 4.4: Average marginal contrasts results from multilevel probit model: party support

Figure 4.5: Average marginal contrasts results from multilevel probit regressions: political leaning

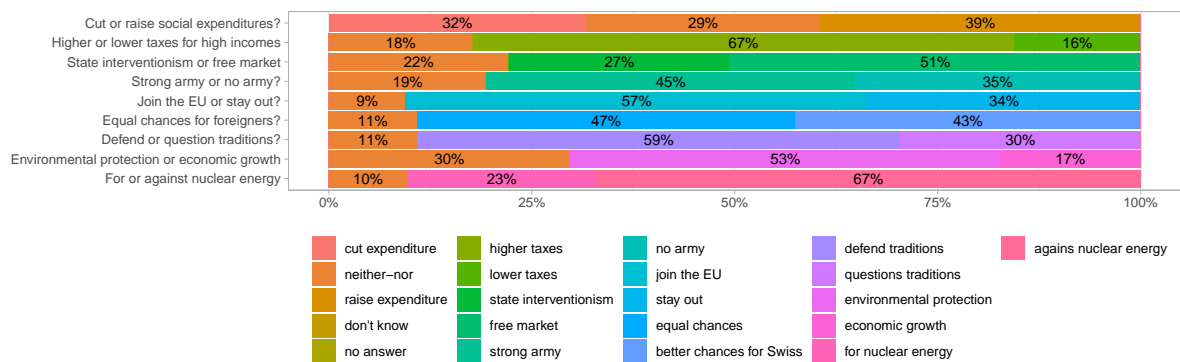Figure 4.6: Average marginal contrasts results from multilevel probit regressions: issue position

Figure 4.7: Variables chosen as indicators in the Latent class model for 1999: descriptive statistics

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