Ethnic Structure, Inequality and Governance in the Public Sector in Switzerland

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Contents

Summary/Résumé/Resumen

Summary

Switzerland is one of the few multilingual countries in Europe that does not have political difficulties with its linguistic minorities. Yet it would be fundamentally wrong to think of Switzerland as a country without historical conflicts. Modern Switzerland was not created by one homogeneous ethnic people but by different ethnic groups speaking different languages and following different religions. As in other countries, the processes of nation building, industrialization, urbanization and modernization were accompanied by societal conflicts.

But over the past 150 years, Switzerland has been fortunate to find political ways of achieving multicultural understanding; this has been based mainly on two concepts. First, Switzerland renounced the idea of creating a culturally homogeneous nation-state. Instead, from the very beginning of its modern existence, it has been an "artificial" multicultural nation, depending on the political will of its inhabitants with different cultures. Second, Switzerland was able to create a type of democracy that favours and enforces political power sharing between the different cultural groups. This led to social and political integration, peaceful conflict resolution by negotiation, and national consensus among a once-fragmented and heterogeneous population.

The paper is based on both qualitative and quantitative work. While the institutional analysis is mainly qualitative and based on previous research carried out by Wolf Linder, supplemented by the cleavage analysis of Seymour Lipset and Stein Rokkan, the effects of the institutional arrangements on both minority representation and equality are empirically demonstrated with quantitative data. The paper begins with a description of the ethnic structures and cleavages in Switzerland and their development. It then provides an overview of the Swiss political system and its institutional elements of political integration. Finally, the scope and limits of these arrangements are discussed through an analysis of their effects on minority representation and equality.

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Résumé

La Suisse est l'un des rares pays multilingues d'Europe qui n'ait pas de difficultés politiques avec ses minorités linguistiques. Pourtant, il serait fondamentalement faux de penser à la Suisse comme un pays sans conflit historique. La Suisse moderne n'est pas faite d'une seule ethnie homogène mais de divers groupes ethniques qui parlent des langues différentes et ont des religions différentes. Comme dans d'autres pays, l'édification de la nation, l'industrialisation, l'urbanisation et la modernisation se sont accompagnées de conflits de société.

Cependant, depuis 150 ans, la Suisse a eu la chance de trouver les moyens politiques de faire régner la bonne entente entre ses diverses cultures. Cette concorde a reposé essentiellement sur deux concepts. Premièrement, la Suisse a renoncé à l'idée de former un Etat-nation culturellement homogène. Depuis ses débuts, la Suisse moderne est, au contraire, une nation multiculturelle "artificielle", dont l'existence ne tient qu'à la volonté politique de ses habitants, aux cultures différentes. Deuxièmement, elle a su se doter d'un type de démocratie qui favorise et pratique le partage du pouvoir politique entre les divers groupes culturels. Les résultats ont été l'intégration sociale et politique, le règlement pacifique des conflits par la négociation, et un consensus national chez une population autrefois morcelée et hétérogène.

Cette étude repose sur des travaux à la fois qualitatifs et quantitatifs. Si l'analyse des institutions, complétée par l'analyse des clivages de Seymour Lipset et Stein Rokkan, est principalement qualitative et s'appuie sur des recherches antérieures effectuées par Wolf

Linder, les effets des mécanismes institutionnels sur la représentation de la minorité et sur l'égalité sont démontrés empiriquement à l'aide de données quantitatives. L'étude commence par une description des structures ethniques et des clivages en Suisse et de leur évolution. Elle donne ensuite une vue d'ensemble du système politique suisse et des éléments d'intégration politique qui tiennent aux institutions. Enfin, les auteurs traitent de la portée et des limites de ces mécanismes en analysant leurs effets sur la représentation de la minorité et sur l'égalité.

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Resumen

Suiza es uno de los pocos países multilingües de Europa que no tiene dificultades políticas con sus minorías lingüísticas. No obstante, sería un error fundamental pensar que Suiza es un país sin conflictos históricos. La Suiza moderna no fue creada por un pueblo étnico homogéneo sino por distintos grupos que hablaban distintos idiomas y tenían distintas religiones. Como ocurrió en otros países, el proceso de formación de la nación, la industrialización, urbanización y modernización fue acompañado por conflictos societales.

Sin embargo, durante los últimos 150 años, Suiza ha tenido la suerte de encontrar soluciones políticas para lograr el respeto entre las culturas. Esto se basó en dos conceptos. Primero, Suiza renunció a la idea de formar un estado-nación culturalmente homogéneo. En vez de eso, desde el principio de su historia moderna, fue una nación multicultural "artificial", que dependía de la voluntad política de sus ciudadanos de distintas culturas. En segundo lugar, Suiza fue capaz de crear un tipo de democracia que favorece y protege la distribución del poder político entre los distintos grupos culturales. Esto mostró el camino hacia la integración social y política, la resolución de conflictos de forma pacífica y negociada, y el consenso nacional entre una población anteriormente dividida y heterogénea.

El estudio se basa tanto en un trabajo tanto cualitativo como cuantitativo. Mientras que el análisis institucional es principalmente cualitativo y se sustenta en investigaciones previas llevadas a cabo por Wolf Linder, apoyado por el análisis cuantitativo de Seymour Lipset y Stein Rokkan, los efectos de las disposiciones institucionales tanto en la representación como en la igualdad de las minorías se demuestran empíricamente usando datos numéricos. El estudio empieza con una descripción de las estructuras étnicas y las divisiones en Suiza y su desarrollo. Luego da una perspectiva general del sistema político suizo y sus elementos institucionales de integración política. Finalmente, el alcance y los límites de estas disposiciones se presentan mediante un análisis de sus efectos sobre la representación y la igualdad de las minorías.

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Introduction

Switzerland is one of the few multilingual countries in Europe that does not have political difficulties with its linguistic minorities. However, it would be fundamentally wrong to think of Switzerland as a country without historical conflict on this issue. Modern Switzerland was not created by one homogeneous ethnic people, but by different ethnic groups speaking different languages and following different religions. Societal conflicts similar to those of other countries accompanied the process of nation building, industrialization, urbanization and modernization.

However, over the past 150 years Switzerland has successfully achieved multicultural understanding through political means that are mainly based on two concepts. First, Switzerland renounced the idea of creating a culturally homogeneous nation-state. Instead, from the beginning of its modern existence, it formed an "artificial" multicultural nation, dependent upon the political will of its inhabitants from different cultures. Second, Switzerland was able to create a type of democracy that favours and enforces political power sharing between the different cultural groups. This led to social and political integration, peaceful conflict resolution by negotiation and national consensus among a once fragmented and heterogeneous population.

To a large extent, Swiss society is a product of its political institutions, which led Karl Deutsch to speak of Switzerland as a "paradigmatic case of political integration" (Linder 2002b:16). This paper addresses the Swiss institutions of political integration and their effects on minority representation and equality. Our research relies on qualitative as well as quantitative research. While the institutional analysis is primarily qualitative—based on previous research (Linder 2002a, 2002b, 1999, 1998) and supplemented by the concept of cleavage of Lipset and Rokkan (1967)—the effects of the institutions on both minority representation and equality are empirically demonstrated with quantitative data.

The paper begins by describing the ethnic structures and cleavages and their development in Switzerland. This is followed by an overview of the Swiss political system and its institutional elements of political integration. Subsequently, the scope and limits of these arrangements are discussed by analysing their effects on minority representation and equality, followed by concluding remarks.

I. Ethnic Structures and Cleavages in Switzerland

Description of ethno-linguistic groups: German, French, Italian and Romansh speakers

In the nineteenth century, nation building was typically a process of "national unification", uniting a people with a common culture, ethnicity or language. But this is not the case for Switzerland. The Constitution of 1848 federated the peoples of 25 cantons,[1] with different historical backgrounds and cultures, into four ethno-linguistic groups. Today, approximately 70 per cent of the population speak German, 22 per cent French, 7 per cent Italian and less than 1 per cent Romansh, a minor language largely descended from Latin and spoken in a few alpine regions in southeast Switzerland.[2] The linguistic groups are spread throughout the subnational units, but most of the Swiss cantons have an overwhelming majority of one linguistic group. Hence, there are 15 German-, six French- and one Italian-speaking cantons as well as four multilingual cantons.

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[1] In 1978, a part of the Bern canton separated and created the Jura canton (see also section III, Scope and limits of political integration). Thus, the Swiss Federation now consists of 26 cantons.

[2] If the total resident population—including foreigners—is considered, the percentages change slightly with 65 per cent German, 20 per cent French, 6 per cent Italian, 0.5 per cent Romansh and 8.5 per cent other languages (BFS 2003).

While the ethno-linguistic cleavage never became a crucial issue, historically the concerns of religious minorities triggered belligerent conflicts. In the nineteenth century, they resulted in the "cultural struggle" (*Kulturkampf*) and led beyond religion to different views of society (Linder 1998; see also the last part of this section I). By comparison, today's public opinion polls show that the Swiss population is much less concerned with linguistic differences.

Even so, linguistic-cultural differences still persist in the society and frequently lead to discussions. Public opinion about the ethno-linguistic groups differs in three basic areas: (i) in relations between the cantons and the federation; (ii) in social policy; and (iii) in relations with foreign countries, which is probably the most important "source of division". Furthermore, some researchers have identified a process of drifting apart, such as the economic predominance of the German-speaking part of Switzerland.[3] Such differences periodically fade away or develop again. For instance, in the 1990s, the results of some important popular votes showed an increasing dissent between the French- and German-speaking parts of Switzerland.

It is interesting to note that the perception of these differences also varies between the ethno-linguistic regions. While a majority of the German speakers considers the division of French- and German-speaking Switzerland—the so-called *Röstigraben*—to be of no real importance, the French-speakers judge it to be salient (Kriesi et al. 1996). This is another reason why the ethno-linguistic cleavage remains significant.

Finally, mingling between the ethno-linguistic groups is rather limited. In fact, languages form a distinct barrier to migration between the regions (Filippini 1998). This is primarily true for low-skilled and elderly people, who often are not able to speak a second official language. From the 1970s to the 1990s, movement between the French- and Italian-speaking regions decreased by 11 per cent, and migration between the German- and French-speaking parts decreased by 47 per cent (BFS 1996).

Although the linguistic differences do not induce critical problems, the ethno-linguistic cleavage remains one of the most important and most visible cleavages in Switzerland.

Analysis of the ethno-linguistic cleavage based on Lipset and Rokkan's concept of the four European cleavages

Lipset and Rokkan (1967) identified four critical cleavages that help to explain much of the social history of Europe since the beginning of the nineteenth century. Two of these cleavages are a direct product of the National Revolution. The first was the conflict between the central nation-building culture and the increasing resistance of the ethnically, linguistically or religiously distinct populations in the provinces and the peripheries of society (centre versus periphery). In Switzerland, this cleavage was initially manifested in the tensions between the ethno-linguistic groups, with the French-, Italian- and Romansh-speaking parts forming the minority in opposition to the German-speaking centre. The second cleavage resulted from the conflict between the centralizing and mobilizing nation-state and the historically established privileges of the church (state versus church).

Two other cleavages derived from the Industrial Revolution: (i) the conflict between the traditional agricultural interests and the rising class of industrial entrepreneurs (rural versus urban); and (ii) the struggle between owners and employers on one side and tenants, labourers and workers on the other (capital versus labour).

According to Lipset and Rokkan (1967), the cleavage structure in the European countries not only determined the process of nation building, it also strongly influenced and still influences the political party systems of the European democracies. Their "frozen party" hypothesis demonstrates that even today, with much different economic and political conditions, the party

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[3] See Kriesi et al. (1996); Du Bois (1991); Favez (1983); Knüsel (1994); and Ruffieux (1983).

systems still reflect the cleavage structure of the 1920s. And while the second half of the twentieth century has seen new cleavages,[4] the four classical cleavages persist in European society. Far from implying that nothing changes, Lipset and Rokkan (1967) observed that cleavages tend to modify over time. As section II shows, this is also the case for Switzerland.

Development of the four cleavages: A comparative overview

When the Swiss federal state was established in the middle of the nineteenth century, the two most crucial cleavages in Switzerland were the conflicts between the Catholic and the Protestant forces and the tensions between the ethno-linguistic groups. Because of the dominance of the German-speaking, secular-oriented Protestants, the Catholic and linguistic minorities feared discrimination in a united nation-state. In addition, the canton's economic structures varied considerably, fuelling further inequity. Though early industrialization had already occurred in some regions, the move toward liberalization was slower in the rural cantons.

In drafting the Constitution of 1848, these conflicts had to be taken into account. Thus, to guarantee the protection of the Catholics and the French- and Italian-speaking population, and in order to find a compromise between the diverging interests, the democratic principle was combined with federalism, allocating considerable autonomy to the cantons.

However, in the years following the foundation of the federal state, the religious cleavage became even more disruptive. On the one hand, the Catholics withdrew to their "home regions", the mainly rural cantons where they had a majority, which led to a kind of segmented Catholic society (Altermatt 1989). As a consequence, many Catholic cantons entrusted the Catholic Church with the task of public education or maintained segregated public primary and secondary schools. On the other hand, secular liberal forces strongly pushed for public laicist schools. They considered religion a private affair and therefore struggled against the political influence of the church. Thus, the religious conflict culminated in the so-called cultural struggle (*Kulturkampf*), which focused on the question of the church's role in society. Simultaneously, the complete revision of the Swiss Constitution in 1873–1874 was on the agenda. The liberal majority subsequently enforced their secular concerns, which resulted in several discriminatory regulations for the Catholic minority such as the prohibition of Jesuits and monasteries. The latter were abolished by a popular vote not until a hundred years later, which was more a result of a cooling down of the religious conflicts rather than of a political solution (Linder 1999).

One of the main reasons of this cooling down was related to the political integration of the Catholics. Federalism allowed them to preserve their own culture. For instance, in the second half of the twentieth century, some religious separated schools still existed in several cantons. Furthermore, and probably most important, the adoption of the referendum device in 1874 granted influential veto power to the Catholic cantons. Thereafter, the liberals needed the support of the conservative Catholics, which eventually resulted in the first seat for the Catholics on the Federal Council in 1891. Then, after the adoption of the proportional voting system accompanied by the integration of the Social Democrats, a coalition of at least two parties was needed in order to achieve a majority. As a consequence, the historical opponents — the liberals and Catholic conservatives — became political allies against the Left and the religious cleavage became less important.

During the first half of the twentieth century, the conflicts between the Right and the Left and between capital and labour formed the dominant cleavage. Compared with other European countries, the industrialization of Switzerland took place relatively early, and was somewhat different compared to related developments in other countries. Instead of concentrating in urban areas, important industries such as watchmaking, textiles and embroidery were

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[4]   The new cleavages concern the differences between materialist and postmaterialist forces (Ingelhart 1997) and the conflict between the conservatives of the Right and the liberal forces that support the international opening of the country. Although these cleavages are of growing importance in Swiss politics, they cannot be attributed to structural characteristics and milieus. Therefore, they are not discussed further in this paper.

established in rural areas. This decentralizing of industrialization also prevented the sudden concentration of a mass proletariat in the cities. But, as in every capitalist country, industrialization led to increasing inequalities and the impoverishment of a new social class of workers subject to insecure jobs and low wages (Linder 1998). In the first decades of the twentieth century, the conditions of the Swiss working class worsened. Politically marginalized by the collaboration of bourgeois forces, both the Social Democrats and the unions could not prevent the working class from bearing most of the burden of the economic setback during and after the First World War.

In addition, during this period the ethno-linguistic cleavage reached its peak. In the First World War, Switzerland almost broke apart when the political elite took different sides in the conflict between its neighbours: whereas the majority of the German-speaking Swiss identified with Germany, the French-speaking population sympathized with France.

The worldwide economic crisis of the 1930s also brought mass unemployment to Switzerland. Several strikes by angry workers were suppressed by federal troops. The political Left was denied what Catholics and farmers had achieved: recognition, political influence and participation in the Federal Council. The principles of proportional rule and participation were used to integrate cultural minorities, but not to resolve the problems of a growing socioeconomic cleavage in Swiss society. As a consequence, the socialist movement split into two factions: (i) the "revolutionary" communists claiming that bourgeois democracy was solely an instrument of the capitalist class; and (ii) a "reformist" social-democratic group that insisted on proportional representation in all democratic institutions even if a bourgeois majority dominated the state. Until the Second World War, the worker's movement—still discriminated against—hesitated between polarizing class struggle and cooperation in the hope of achieving integration. In the end, outside events gave the latter the upper hand. Faced with the threat of fascism, the Social Democrats gave up their opposition against armament and voted instead for the modernization of the army. A vital treaty between employer's organizations and the trade unions of the mechanical engineering industry was signed in 1937, the so-called Labour Peace Convention (*Friedensabkommen*), which accepted unions as officially representative organizations of the workers, proposed to resolve all conflicts by negotiation and promised to end strikes and lock-outs.

In the middle of the twentieth century, the economic and social inequalities thus finally began to be addressed through cooperation and integration. The Social Democrats obtained their first seat in the Federal Council during the Second World War and attained proportional representation in the federal government in 1959. The unifying experiences of the generation that had defended Swiss independence and neutrality between 1939 and 1945 were evident as ideological differences between the Left and the Right shrank. A consensus among all political forces expanded the social security system, health care and insurance services and higher education systems, which reduced many areas of social and economic inequality. Economic growth led employers and worker's organizations toward cooperation and away from confrontation. Collective contracts between employers and employees, similar to the 1937 Labour Peace Convention, became the rule.

By the early 1970s, the highest degree of integration of different social classes in Switzerland had been reached. Since then, however, the social integration of Swiss society has somewhat declined. When economic growth turned into recession in 1974, the political Left learned that proportional participation did not mean proportional influence. In 1984, a minority of the Social Democratic Party proposed quitting the Federal Council because political power sharing was not shifting influence from the haves to the have-nots. Unions, though willing to share the burden of recession by accepting pay cuts, were losing members and political influence. Maintaining consensus became more difficult (Linder 1998).

This situation was accentuated with high unemployment in the 1990s and with the decline of the "new economy" at the beginning of the twenty-first century. Unemployment, funding of the

social security systems, issues of migrants and European integration led to an increasing polarization of the political system, which reached a culmination in the elections of 2003.

These latest developments show that the cleavage between the Right and the Left did not become meaningless with the end of the class struggle. In contrast, there is evidence that today the opposition between the Right and the Left still represents the most general, most clear-cut and in some ways most important political orientation. First, it is the main cleavage between political elites. Second, the Right-Left orientation is important for the parties' aggregation of interests and mobilization both in the popular vote and in elections. As we have shown, something similar can be said on a more general level—not only political, but also cultural and societal—for the ethno-linguistic cleavage: although the linguistic conflicts are not predominant in today's political and societal life, the fundamental differences between the German- and the French-speaking parts of Switzerland are still noticed.

Recapitulating, the development of the four main cleavages has shown two important aspects. First, although Switzerland seems to be in a very privileged position with unquestionable political stability, it is not without historical conflicts. The processes of nation building, urbanization, industrialization and modernization were accompanied by societal conflicts similar to other countries. And even today, most of the conflicts are to some extent visible and regain importance from time to time and the Right-Left conflict is fuelled by the development of new socioeconomic inequalities.

Second, the historical developments make clear that the role of the political institutions was important in order to unite a people with four languages, two religions and different regional cultures. The key to this process was the integration and a particular way of dealing with conflicts and problems in a peaceful manner, both dependent upon the Swiss political system. In section II, the Swiss Consensus Democracy and its elements of political integration are discussed.

II. The Swiss Political System: A Consensus Democracy

A short description of the institutional framework

Switzerland is, together with Canada and the United States, one of the three classical federations. Its institutional structure consists of three levels of government: the federation, 26 cantons and almost 3,000 communes. The cantons, as well as the communes, are characterized by a comprehensive political organization with separation of powers, constitutionally guaranteed political autonomy and the right to impose taxes in order to fulfil their responsibilities. Historically speaking, the Swiss Federation can be considered as a case of "non-centralization": when founding the federation in 1848, the cantons kept their statehood, their Constitutions and most of their political autonomy. Today, the central government controls only about 30 per cent of the overall public budget; thus, the Swiss Federation has remained one of the most decentralized countries.

Furthermore, these federalist structures are combined with proportional representation and direct democracy in a system of power sharing. Instead of majority rule, the election system is proportional, the government is composed of coalitions that are representative beyond a simple majority and political consensus is sought among all pluralist forces. Thus, as a whole, Switzerland corresponds to the model of a consensus democracy.

The Swiss case within the framework of Lijphart's theory
of majoritarian and consensus democracy

Swiss consensus democracy is based on the idea of integrating minorities through proportional representation and political participation. Politics is characterized by compromise within an

oversized coalition. Moreover, there is a vertical division of power through federalism, leaving the utmost autonomy to smaller units. In political science this is therefore also called a "consociational" or "power sharing" model of democracy.

The contrasting model of democracy is described as a majoritarian democracy, which is the predominant model of democracy in the world and follows the Anglo-Saxon tradition. It is based on the idea of majority decision and a regular change of the government in power. Voters elect a majority in Parliament, and the parliamentary majority nominates the government. If the government party loses its parliamentary majority or fails in re-elections, it must relinquish power and the former opposition party takes control.

The political scientist Arend Lijphart (1999, 1984) has identified eight elements in order to distinguish between the two models of majoritarian and consensus democracy (see table 1).

Table 1: Majoritarian and consensus democracy

Elements of the majoritarian (Westminster) model	Elements of the consensus model
Concentration of executive power in one-party and bare-majority cabinets	Executive power sharing, grand coalition
Fusion of power and cabinet dominance over Parliament	Executive-legislative balance of power
Unicameralism or asymmetric bicameralism	Balanced bicameralism, minority representation
Two-party system, one-dimensional	Multiparty system, pluri-dimensional
Plurality electoral system	Proportional representation
Interest group pluralism	Corporatist interest group system
Unitary and centralized government	Federal and decentralized government
Unwritten Constitution	Written Constitution and minority veto

The majoritarian democracy—also called the Westminster model—in all aspects supports the idea of clear majority decisions in which the winner takes all. The plurality electoral system favours a two-party system producing sound parliamentarian majorities. Both the majority of Parliament and the government form the ruling power block. Unicameralism, a one-party cabinet and a unitary and centralized government concentrate power in a few hands.

In contrast, the consensus model favours political integration above all. Power sharing is guaranteed throughout by vetoes that block the pure majority rule. Its main elements are bicameralism, federalism and decentralization, proportional elections and proportional representation, which can be extended by law or political practice to practically all authorities—for example, executive, high officials of the administration, courts and consulting bodies. This also grants political influence to small parties in a multiparty system. The restrictions of a written Constitution, the division of the executive and the legislative power and a minority veto constitute an effective set of checks and balances.

Lijphart (1999) has shown that, in principle, all democracies can be situated between the contrasting poles of the two theoretical models. He distinguishes two dimensions: the first is the "structural" dimension of federalism, and the second is a "procedural" dimension, characterized by political decision making. Whereas the United Kingdom renounces both the vertical and the horizontal dimension of power sharing and can thus be seen as a "pure" majoritarian system, Switzerland—stressing both vertical and horizontal power sharing—comes close to the pure model of consensus democracy (Linder 2002a).

For obvious reasons, structural minorities are better off with the consensus than the majoritarian model of democracy. In a majoritarian democracy, a change of power happens if a sufficient number of voters changes their preferences, for instance, favouring a Right- or Left-wing government that offers different economic programmes. If a people share common cultural values, beliefs and language, this may be an adequate decision-making procedure. In

multicultural societies, however, majoritarian democracy may encounter serious difficulties. Cultural values, beliefs and languages are not only heterogeneous, but also may lead to different political preferences that do not change. Parents, for instance, cannot decline to send their children to schools that teach in their own language, or discard their religious beliefs, without giving up a part of their cultural identity (Linder 1998; Fleiner et al. 2002). In these cases, a change of preferences is not likely to happen. People's decisions are shaped by their own values, and conflict between the majority and the minorities is inevitable. Moreover, if the predominant cultural majority is large enough, the winner-takes-all rule of the majoritarian democracy will minimize the risk of losing power by offering special advantages to its own cultural group. The government then may fail to take into account the needs and preferences of a cultural minority and the majority rule may be alienating for those cultural segments that consistently remain in a minority position. An example of this is the situation in Northern Ireland. In the majoritarian system of United Kingdom, the Irish Catholics will never be able to override the Protestant majority, instead they form an "eternal minority". Therefore, the Protestant majority has no incentive to respect the Catholic concerns. Thus, in a multicultural society a majoritarian democracy gives the cultural majority the power to ignore a minority request—or, according to Deutsch (1967), the majority can afford not to act: it has no incentive to take into account other ideas and arguments because the risk of losing power does not exist.

In contrast, in a consensus democracy the majority cannot simply rule out small parties and structural minorities because it relies on their support. According to its name, a consensus democracy demands compromise between different interests. In this arrangement, the majority cannot deny these interests and there are institutional devices—so-called veto points—that make compromise inevitable. Thus, minorities take their proportional share of power for granted. Furthermore, due to the decentralized government, consensus democracy allows for political autonomy of territorially segmented minorities, who in turn may influence politics at the regional level where they predominate.[5] This is discussed further below.

III. In-Depth Analysis of Institutional Elements of Political Integration

Institutional elements of political integration in Switzerland

The consensual alignment of the Swiss political system is demonstrated by several institutional and procedural elements, including the following six aspects of political integration.

The concept of the political versus the cultural nation

With regard to their constitutional foundation, nation-states can be distinguished between cultural and political nations (Linder 2002a; Fleiner et al. 2002). A cultural nation is defined by a people of a specific origin, history, religion or language and is based on the hope of integrating a common history, origin or ethnicity. This idea of a nation-state made of "one language, one culture, one religion" largely influenced the nation building of Italy and Germany in the nineteenth century.

A political nation is characterized by constitutional guarantees for equal citizenship for all people regardless of their individual language, origin or ethnicity. Thus, the state is indifferent to ethnicity, language or religion, but stipulates the same rights and obligations for all people who are citizens of the state.

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[5] It should be mentioned that the importance of federalism as a defining element of consensus democracy has been recently questioned (Lane and Ersson 2000). For instance, empirical examples such as Belgium or the United States show that federalism is actually not a sufficient condition for a consensual democracy. However, if a country has a consensual alignment—as is the case in Switzerland—federalism can still be seen as an important instrument that helps to confirm consensual politics.

A cultural nation may be adequate for culturally homogenous societies. But obviously in multicultural societies, a nation based on the idea of mono-culturality runs the risk of biased treatment of citizens who do not share the dominant cultural elements. In this case, a state's conception of equal citizenship for all inhabitants, based on political will and not on specific ethnic or cultural characteristics of the people, is an important element of mutual respect and non-discrimination.

Switzerland is a typical example of a political nation. The first Constitution of 1848 stated that it is the cantons and their peoples who constitute the Swiss Federation. It was not created on the principle of a common language, religion or ethnicity, but on the abstract principle of citizenship. Therefore, from the beginning of its modern existence it has been an "artificial" multicultural nation, depending only on the constraints of history and on the political will of its inhabitants with different cultures (Linder 2002b, 1998).

What are the reasons that allow peoples of different religions, languages and cultures to come together? By the middle of the nineteenth century, industrialization had reached many cantons and created the economic necessity to build a common market between them. Simultaneously, the cantons witnessed important experiments in nation building when their small neighbouring kingdoms became parts of Italy and Germany. The cantons became surrounded by much larger and more powerful nation-states. Therefore, the external political pressure to unite in order to assure a stronger collective security for all of the cantons increased.

Federalism

Respecting the existence of a multicultural society with different preferences and interests, the Constitution of 1848 envisioned bottom-up nation building, characterized by non-centralization. Only a few responsibilities were given to the central government, such as defence and foreign relations, while the cantons kept the utmost political autonomy and statehood with their own Constitutions, right of taxation and responsibilities. To date, the central government cannot acquire any new responsibilities without the explicit consent of the cantons. Federalism, in this context, is a vertical power-sharing device. It allowed the cantons — and therewith the ethno-linguistic groups — to keep their own traditions and cultures as well as their political identities (Linder 2002). The political autonomy of the subnational units is ample and guaranteed through the Constitution.

The cantons must respect the principles of democracy and guarantee fundamental rights and the rule of law as described in the federal Constitution. But the cantons are also allowed to have their own political organizations, their own authorities free from political influence of the federal government and ample autonomy in legislation to set their own policies for public goods and services, taxation and finance.

About 3,000 communes form the third level of the Swiss federal system and are similar to the cantons in terms of rights and responsibilities. They have the right of existence that is protected by the Federal Court, similar to a fundamental right. Thus, no commune can be merged with another against its political will. Communes have their own political organizations and authorities and their own policies with regard to the production and distribution of local public goods. Most important, they maintain autonomy on issues of local taxes and in their financial policy (Linder 1998).

Originally, responsibilities between the three levels were sharply separated. Today, however, there is active cooperation between the three tiers. For instance, parts of the social security system are maintained at the national level, while others are local issues. In many policy fields, the federation is responsible for general legislation, while the cantons and communes are in charge of specific legislation and implementation as it relates to their respective autonomies. With some exceptions, there is no parallel federal administration with its own regional services, agencies or even courts, and only very few federal services deal directly with the public.

With respect to the ethno-linguistic groups, two points should be mentioned. First, although the federation shapes general legislation, the cantons have considerable options in its implementation. As a result of the differences in cantonal traditions, culture and political preferences in practice, policies vary considerably among cantons. Second, the fact that the federal legislation relies on cantonal or communal implementation gives them strong veto power (Vatter 2002). If cantonal consensus for an innovation is lacking—for example, because it does not respect the interests of the French-speaking cantons—it runs a considerable risk of being blocked or neutralized in the implementation process.

Besides having their own substantial responsibilities and resources, the cantons also participate in the decision-making processes at the national level. The cantons take an active part in all federal affairs, whether amending the Constitution, developing new legislation or implementing federal affairs. Through full bicameralism consisting of two legislative chambers, the cantons have their say in federal legislation. They are represented by the Council of States, which resembles the role of the Senate in the bicameralist United States congress and is one of the two chambers of the Swiss Parliament. The other chamber, the National Council, represents the people. To become valid, a parliamentary decision requires the majority of both the Council of States and the National Council. Each chamber has the same responsibilities and deliberates on all issues in turn. The institutional means of participation by the cantons also include processes of direct democracy and consultation, which is discussed later. Thus, all-important federal decisions are subject to a double decision rule: the democratic rule with the principle of "one person, one vote" and the federalist rule with the principle of "one vote for each member state".

The cantons are politically equal, but differ in population size and economic potential. While the largest cantons such as Bern or Zurich account for about one million people each, the smaller ones such as Appenzell or Uri have just 20,000 or 30,000 inhabitants. Moreover, there is economic inequality as rural and mountain regions are relatively poor in comparison to some urban cantons. For both reasons, Swiss federalism, the so-called cooperative federalism, provides additional financial compensation. It serves to adjust differences in financial revenue and expenditure between rich and poor cantons or communes and to compensate the bigger ones for the services they provide for smaller ones, which do not provide some services for their inhabitants (Klöti 1988). In contrast to other federalist states such as the United States, which rely on the idea of competition between the subnational units, the Swiss cooperative federalism follows the idea of a commonwealth of all regions and of mutuality (Linder and Vatter 2001).

Thus, federalism is and was a crucial element of the Swiss political system that helped integrate the linguistic and cultural minorities. The 26 cantons, with their different cultures, languages and religions, most of them having enjoyed centuries of political autonomy, were able to create a territorial state. Without federalism and its principle of dividing power between the new central government and the cantonal authorities, and without the federal promise to maintain regional differences and autonomy, the historical process of the nineteenth century would not have resulted in successful nation building in Switzerland. Moreover, federalism helped to overcome the strong political cleavages of religion and language in a peaceful way (Linder 2002b). And even today, when differences between the linguistic groups still exist but are not as dramatic, federalism allows for a certain cultural and political autonomy, at least within cantonal borders.

Political parties and their positions on societal cleavages

According to Lipset and Rokkan (1967), societal cleavages form the potential milieu from which social organizations such as political parties emerge. In this sense, parties always stand for specific social segments and classes. They represent their clientele's interests and needs, and tap the full potential of their votes. The relevance of Lipset and Rokkan's concept of the process of party formation in Switzerland is particularly appropriate. On the secular side, the Liberal Party (Radical) innervated the urban, civil-libertarian population and the People's Party activated the rural civil-libertarian potential, whereas the Social Democrats represented the interests of the

"working class". On the other side, the Christian Democrats not only acted for the cultural-political interests of the Catholics, but also formed the federalist periphery. Still today, these four parties form the governing coalition representing about 70 per cent of the voting power.

This demonstrates that in the complex Swiss society, parties normally build on the potential of multiple cleavages in order to cover a specific segment of the population. However, one important point should be mentioned: there has never been a political party that explicitly represented the linguistic groups, although this cleavage probably could have helped to win a not-so-negligible number of votes. But Swiss parties never tried to exploit the potential of this cleavage and therefore assisted in neutralizing ethno-linguistic tensions. This became possible because the parties were not considered as primarily linguistically-based, but more importantly as national parties. And today, the parties in Switzerland want to receive votes from all regions and therefore do not emphasize ethno-politics (Linder 2002b).[6]

Proportional representation

In the Swiss federal system, proportional representation is a general key to power sharing in the sense that it opens many doors to political participation. From the beginning, many federal institutions were designed for proportional representation of different languages and cultural segments of the cantonal peoples. Proportional representation plays a part in the election of the National Council and the cantonal and communal Parliaments, which gives even small or regional political parties seats as well as a voice. Accordingly, a formal proportionality rule—including the criterion of proportional representation of the four languages—is set to elect the 39 members of the Federal Court.

Proportional representation, however, is even more extensive. Political parties agree to a proportional share of seats even if the election rules would allow a majoritarian coalition to win all of the seats. For example, the federal executive—the Federal Council—consists of a collegiate body of seven members that collectively addresses all-important issues. Since 1959, the same four governmental parties of Radicals, Christian Democrats, Social Democrats and the People's Party share the seats of the Federal Council. Thus, proportional representation of political parties is combined with the criteria of language and, recently, gender to integrate the different linguistic regions. The Parliament elects representatives from the three major regions of the country, normally granting French- and Italian-speakers two or three seats.

This kind of a rather voluntary proportional rule is also applied in most of the executive bodies at the cantonal level, in all branches and the hierarchy of the federal government and its administration. Thus, high-level army officers and many government officials also must fulfil more than one criterion of proportionality to be eligible for a position. In fact, a criticism about this system is that the real job requirements are too often neglected in favour of proportionality (Linder 1998).

The flexibility of the system, however, allows some overrepresentation or underrepresentation, but which is usually compensated for over time. Moreover, there are no real "group rights" because demands of representation cannot be enforced by law. Proportionality, therefore, is more a political issue than a legal practice. Finally, the proportional rule is applicable beyond politics and positions in government. It is practised in organizations that deal with the economy, aspects of social life and even in sports associations. This is particularly true for linguistic proportional representation (Linder 1998).

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[6] It should be mentioned that the national parties never limited their potential clientele to one ethno-linguistic region (see also the section III, The deviant case: Analysis and consequences of the secession of the French-speaking Jura region from the German-speaking Bern canton). For instance, there are Catholic cantons in both the German-speaking and the Latin parts of Switzerland. Thus, for the Christian Democratic Party it was quite rational to integrate people of all ethno-linguistic regions. In contrast, until recently the Christian Democrats failed to woo Protestants into their fold. Even if in the 1970s the party changed its name from "Catholic Conservative" to "Christian Democratic", it primarily remains a Catholic party today.

In fact, proportional representation can be seen as a core element of political integration in Switzerland as it offers several advantages for the non-discrimination of ethnic minorities (Linder 2002a). Instead of supporting the principle of "the winner takes all", proportional rule as a veto power gives a voice to all groups. In addition, at least as important is its high symbolic value. In segmented societies, the relations between different groups are often characterized by the isolation of minorities, mutual prejudice and mistrust. In rejecting the idea of hegemony of a single culture, proportional representation can be a means to replace these tensions with mutual recognition, which in turn is a prerequisite for "rational" conflict solutions (Linder 2002a). Furthermore, proportional representation is an incentive for negotiated "win-win" solutions. It involves a greater number of actors in decisions and forces them to negotiate and bargain. The result is a political compromise, which ideally also includes minority interests.

Hence, in the long run, this need to speak and negotiate together engenders trust. According to game theory, if only played once, cooperation is a vulnerable situation because certain actors are tempted to take advantage of and to betray the others. This phenomenon is known as the "prisoner's dilemma". But as Axelrod (1987) has shown, defecting happens much less in repeated situations, where the betrayer can be sanctioned in the following game. This is exactly how proportional representation works if it is regularly practised. In particular, trust can develop as a side effect of continuous logrolling: if winning coalitions change, an actor does not know if today's adversary will become a partner in tomorrow's issue, and is therefore treated with more respect.

In addition, the negotiations simply bring together the political representatives of different cultures. As we have emphasized, the political elite can develop mutual understandings—probably more than ordinary people in a deeply divided society. Given the chance to identify with the behaviour of the elite, people become aware of the beneficial effects of intercultural cooperation. In this case, consensual behaviour is no longer limited to the political elite, but becomes part of a common societal culture. Finally, a political compromise is not always very innovative, which in the context of a divided society can be seen as an advantage. Slow but continuous political decision making and compromise take into account that change in social values and attitudes and the cooling down of multicultural conflicts take time.

Minority rights of language

The proportional inclusion of linguistic minorities is a political rather than a legal matter. In fact, there is neither an article in the Constitution nor any law that makes arrangements to protect French- or Italian-speakers as a group. Instead, there is guaranteed protection of the four languages of the otherwise equal citizens.

As stipulated by the Swiss Constitution, German, French, Italian and Romansh are the official languages of the country (Article 4). Thus, the title "Swiss Confederacy" appears in all four languages on banknotes and official documents. However, the enforcement of this multilinguism is limited. Unlike Belgium and Canada, there is no legal obligation to translate all documents into all official languages. For example, only the most important legal texts are translated into Romansh, which is spoken by approximately only 50,000 people. Furthermore, the Constitution guarantees that cantons and communes cannot be forced to change their official language (Article 70), but are authorized or even charged to guarantee the traditional language of their regions. Hence, on the national level and in the relations between the cantons, equal multilinguism is guaranteed, yet the cantons are free to decide within their borders how to deal with linguistic minorities. Actually, in the bilingual cantons—Bern, Freiburg and Valais—as well as in the trilingual Graubünden canton, special statutes ensure, for instance, a certain number of seats in the cantonal Parliament for the linguistic minority (Linder 1999).

To recapitulate, it is important to note that the agreements concerning minority rights of language also express an abdication of the idea of a cultural nation. There are no linguistic

groups with special rights; alternatively, the linguistic autonomy is guaranteed by the principle of "territoriality": it is not the language of a group, but of a region that is protected.

Comprehensive and permanent power sharing under the constraints of direct democracy

Direct democracy contains two elements. On the one hand, popular initiatives allow a group of citizens to bring their own ideas to the legislative process; on the other hand, the referendums offer the possibility of controlling the decisions of Parliament. In the context of minority protection, the popular initiative and the referendum as such are not of primary importance, therefore, this paper does not discuss it in detail. However, there is one important institutional effect of direct democracy—it allows for the exercise of a veto and is thus an element of power sharing.

First, direct democracy was the very reason that the Federal Council, once a one-party cabinet, became a multiparty government. At the end of the nineteenth century, the Conservative opposition largely used the referendums to shoot down important projects of the radical majority. The latter could not see any other possibility than to come to an arrangement with the opposition. The Catholic minority obtained a seat in the previously one-party government, which meant a share of the political responsibility in the solutions proposed by the Federal Council. Thus, behind this "amicable agreement" was a coercive pressure to cooperate. It shows that direct democracy forced the majority to share their power with the minority, because the Radicals saw their large majority in Parliament becoming useless if the referendum challenges by the Catholic minority were not curbed. The Catholic minority, unlikely to obtain a parliamentary majority, could win more through partial cooperation with federal government projects than they could through systematic opposition. For similar reasons, the integration of other important political forces led to wider power sharing in the Federal Council. From 1959, power sharing in the government is supposed to produce solutions that are acceptable to a sufficiently large majority in Parliament and the population in order for the risk of referendums to be reduced.

Second, direct democracy influenced the legislative process (Linder 1998). Integrating the main political parties into a governmental coalition was important, but not enough to achieve a political compromise. During the worldwide depression in the 1930s, the legislative process became blocked by referendum challenges from all sides. Therefore, the Swiss political authorities had to learn that even relatively small groups could use the referendum successfully. Hence, after the Second World War, the legislative process was modified. A constitutional amendment introduced in 1947 gave interest groups the right to be consulted in the shaping of economic legislation that affected them. Since then, the so-called pre-parliamentary consultation has become an important—some say the most important—element of the Swiss legislation process, which helps to integrate the interests of all the different societal, economic and cultural groups. First in the process, the Federal Council, when confronted with the need for new legislation, nominates a study group or a committee of experts, which evaluates the necessity of and the various options of a new bill. The individual members may have a reputation as experts on an issue, but the composition of the committee is intentionally as representative as possible in order to cover all positions that could prove divisive during later discussions. Based on the committee's report, the department in charge of the project then circulates a first draft of the bill to the cantons, the political parties and the relevant interest groups. The Federal Council decides whether to go further on a project only after evaluation of the reactions.

These elements of the pre-parliamentary procedure lead to the integration of different interests and concerns, which is necessary in order to reduce the risk of a referendum challenge. Furthermore, this kind of power sharing cannot be abandoned without changing the institutions. As long as the referendum exists, it will act as a constraint on all political actors. They are bound to look for compromise, whether of minor or major conflict. Hence, direct democracy is one of the main reasons why power sharing is always observed in Swiss politics.

Scope and limits of political integration

The Swiss political system includes several institutional elements that are designed to promote political integration. However, institutional arrangements do not always attain the intended results. Thus, it is important to analyse the effects of Swiss institutions on minority representation and equality in practice. Below we demonstrate the scope as well as the limits of political integration in Switzerland.

General outcomes: Analysis of equality and non-discrimination despite the persistence of the ethno-linguistic cleavage

Proportional representation is one of the main elements of political integration in Switzerland. The most important proportional criteria for the placement of political authorities and the administration are probably ethno-linguistic (Linder 1998). Table 2 shows that the two minorities of French- and Italian-speakers are overrepresented in the Federal Council. From a purely proportional point of view, the German-speaking part of Switzerland, with a population share of more than 70 per cent, could attempt to gain five of the seven seats by excluding the Italian-speaking part from the federal government. However, the inclusion of the three main Swiss languages is preferred in most cases. It is interesting to note that even at the beginning of the Swiss nation-state, when the government as a whole was still in the hands of the Radicals who pursued a majority policy, a policy of inclusion of the ethno-linguistic minorities was already accepted.

Table 2: Proportional representation of ethno-linguistic groups in public authorities and administration (per cent)

	German		French		Italian	
Representation	**1970s**	**1990s**	**1970s**	**1990s**	**1970s**	**1990s**
Population (Swiss citizens only)	*74.5*	*73.4*	*20.1*	*20.5*	*4.0*	*4.1*
Federal Council	65.7	57.1	28.6	30.0	5.7	12.9
Federal Court	NA	66.7	NA	26.7	NA	6.6
National Council	NA	74.0	NA	22.0	NA	4.0
Council of States	NA	71.7	NA	23.9	NA	4.4
Federal administration						
All personnel	76.5	71.5	15.4	20.7	5.2	6.5
Top management	78.8	72.2	19.0	22.0	2.2	5.1
Expert committees	76.9	68.1	20.0	23.8	3.1	8.1

NA = not available. **Note:** The share of Romansh-speakers cannot be evaluated systematically. However, in bodies with only a few seats—for example, the Federal Council—it can be considered as "proportional" that the Romansh-speakers with a population share of less than 1 per cent would have no seat. In contrast, in the general administration currently 0.4 per cent of the employees speak Romansh, which suggests that the proportional representation of the Romansh-speakers is warranted. **Sources:** Germann (1982:24); EPA (2000:6ff.); calculations on the basis of www.admin.ch/ch/d/cf/br/index2.html, accessed on 2 October 2003.

The number of seats in the National Council is calculated based on the cantons' population share. Since there is one dominant language in most of the cantons, it is not surprising that there is a high degree of linguistic proportionality in the National Council. This is once again evidence that the federalist structures are able to protect territorial minorities.

In addition, Table 3 shows that the ethno-linguistic groups are not only well represented in the National Council as a whole, but also in the Council's main parties. The only exception is the People's Party, which until recently was mainly limited to the German-speaking part of Switzerland. However, the party's success in the elections of 2003, which is attributed to several new seats in the French-speaking region, showed that there is also potential for the People's Party in the Latin cantons. Thus, today the largest parties win votes and seats in all linguistic parts of Switzerland, which reflects the multiethnic character of Swiss parties.

Table 3: Swiss parties and linguistic representation in Parliament—distribution of National Council seats by ethno-linguistic regions *(per cent)*

	German			French			Italian		
	1975	**1995**	**2003**	**1975**	**1995**	**2003**	**1975**	**1995**	**2003**
Radicals	70.2	66.7	67.6	23.4	26.7	24.3	6.4	6.7	8.1
Christian Democrats	70.2	64.7	67.9	23.4	29.4	25.0	6.4	5.9	7.1
Social Democrats	74.5	70.4	70.6	23.6	25.9	25.5	1.8	3.7	3.9
People's Party	95.2	96.6	83.6	4.8	3.4	16.4	0.0	0.0	0.0

Sources: IPW (1999, 1979); www.parlament.ch/homepage/ra-raete/ra-nr-nationalrat/ra-nr-nationalrat-mitglieder-prokanton.htm, accessed on 2 December 2003.

According to the fundamental idea of the Council of States, every canton, regardless of its population, has two representatives. Thus, the populous German-speaking cantons such as Bern and Zurich have the same number of seats as the relatively less populated French-speaking cantons such as Jura and Neuchâtel, which leads to a representation slightly in favour of the ethno-linguistic minorities.

In connection with the development of the welfare state in the twentieth century, political scientists cite the appearance of a "political administration" that not only implements what has been decided by the government, but also formulates important policies. Hence, it is not surprising that today proportional representation and equal treatment of the four official languages play an important role in the staffing of the federal administration. Thus, since 1951 the Federal Council has formulated policies for the promotion of multilingualism. According to the directive of 1997, the majority of the departments fulfil the agreement to provide a proportional representation of the ethno-linguistic groups in their areas. In many cases, a representative responsible for multilingualism is appointed, and since 1997 the promotion of linguistic efforts must be reviewed every four years.

A major goal of the federal personnel policy is that linguistic proportionality should not only be assured quantitatively, but also in qualitative respects. This implies that proportional representation should be respected at all levels of the hierarchy in order to assure that influential positions are given to linguistic minorities and that decisions reflect their concerns (EPA 2003). Table 2 refers to a positive development in respect to the Italian-speaking minority: over the last 30 years, the share of Italian-speakers in the federal administration's top management has more than doubled. A similar development can be observed concerning the Expert Committees, where the share of the Latin minorities has also been augmented.

Thus, we argue that the principle of proportional representation of the different ethno-linguistic groups is respected to a high degree at all levels of government. Both in the political authorities and the administration, linguistic representation has developed in favour of the French- and Italian-speaking minorities during the last 30 years in such a way that at the beginning of the twenty-first century, the linguistic minorities are even slightly overrepresented in comparison to their shares of the population.

However, these positive findings remain relative because proportional representation does not necessarily mean proportional influence in practice. In fact, if a group of 10 Swiss citizens has seven German-speakers, two French-speakers and one Italian-speaker, the proportional rule is followed, even in favour of the smallest minority. However, the seven German-speaking representatives can provide a two-thirds majority decision without even speaking or listening to the French- and Italian-speakers. Moreover, the latter are forced to learn German in order to understand what the discussion is about. Of course, the minorities have the right to speak French or Italian; but knowing that the majority would not understand all of the subtleties of those languages, it would probably be better, for the sake of the argument, to hold the

discussion in German. This is not enough: the French- and Italian-speaking members may also have to face the situation where the German majority begins to converse in their regional dialects, which are very different from standard German and therefore barely understandable by the French- or Italian-speakers. This worst-case scenario is in sharp contrast to the best case one, where the polite German-speaking majority loves to speak French and makes French the official language of the discussion (Linder 1998). In reality, both situations occur. Thus, it is important to note that even when institutions are designed for non-discrimination and equality of linguistic minorities through proportional representation, the final outcome depends on the willingness of the majority to make use of these arrangements.

The deviant case: Analysis and consequence of the secession of the French-speaking Jura region from the German-speaking Bern canton

Compared with many multicultural societies that have difficulty coping with their cleavages, it is natural to ask why Swiss society has integrated so successfully. The Swiss are not more peaceful by nature than others, nor is the elite much brighter than elsewhere. However, the literature of comparative politics suggests factors that favour or hamper processes of integration, and a number of them can be identified in the Swiss case (Linder 1998). First, outside pressure, resulting in a common interest to survive as an independent nation, was more important than supporting internal differences on cultural issues. Second, political institutions favourable to power sharing gave voice to structural minorities. A third and very important factor to be considered is the clear-cut geographical coincidence of socioeconomic, religious and linguistic boundaries. Among French-speakers, for example, there are both Catholic and Protestant cantons. Among socioeconomically poor cantons, there are both German- and French-speaking states. Thus, religious, linguistic and socioeconomic cleavages do not coincide with geographical boundaries of the cantons. Rather, they cross-cut each other. The accumulation of different issues into one single political conflict—for instance with poor Catholic French-speakers on one side and rich Protestant German-speakers on the other—could never develop. In contrast, religious and linguistic majorities differ and vary from issue to issue. Most of the cultural groups have at some time experienced being both a part of a minority and of a majority, which has been important for the development of a culture of tolerance and pluralism.

The sole instance of secession in Switzerland exemplifies the importance of this factor (Linder 2002b, 1998). The Jura region originally constituted the northern part of Switzerland's second largest canton of Bern. In a struggle that lasted more than 40 years and included riots and violence, the Jurassian minority fought for separation and autonomy from the canton, which ended in the creation of the new canton of Jura in 1978. The rare instance of overlapping socioeconomic, language and religious differences in the Jura region was largely responsible for this change. First, the Jura region had a double minority—Catholic French-speakers in a Protestant canton populated by German-speakers. Neither could the socioeconomic differences be neglected. Thus, the three cleavages coincided socially and geographically. Yet, this overlap was not evenly balanced throughout the region, making things even more complicated. The southern part was economically better off and had a Protestant majority. Therefore, the population of Jura was divided among themselves into the pro-separatist and anti-separatist movements.

The founders of the Constitution had not anticipated the problem of a region separating from an existing canton and forming a new one. So, before the game could be played, the rules had to be invented. It was clear that three actors would take part. One actor was the people of the Jura region, who had to decide whether they wanted to separate or to remain with the Bern canton. The decision then had to be adopted by the people of the Bern canton as the second actor, considering under what conditions they would accept the separation. Finally, the people and the cantons of the entire Swiss Federation, following the amendment of the Constitution, had to accept both the decision of the Bernese and the Jurassian people to split up the canton and to create a new canton as a member of the federation.

Because the Jurassian population itself was divided, the population of each district of the region was given the right to determine its position by a popular vote. As a result, the region was cut into two parts—the south remained with the Bern canton and the north founded the new canton of Jura. In the end and by a large majority, the Swiss people and the 25 cantons accepted the secession and the creation of the twenty-sixth canton in a popular vote. This result was interpreted as demonstrating the great respect and understanding the Swiss people have for its minority groups (Linder 1998).

However, in the eyes of "irredentist" forces that wanted to unite the whole region in the new Jura canton, this solution did not solve the problem. They proposed other procedural rules, for instance, that the right to vote for the creation of a new canton should be given to all people originating from the Jura region, regardless of their current place of residence. But in fact it was precisely the chosen procedure, founded on the principle of territorial self-determination and the consequential division of the Jura region, that prevented the creation of a new minority problem: the minority that wanted to stay with the Bern canton was not overruled and given the same right of self-determination as the secessionist majority. Thus, the example of the creation of the Jura canton shows not only the relevance of cross-cutting cleavages for a successful integration, but also the importance of establishing the rules of secession.

Language policy or the limits of federalism

Federalism is often seen as the decisive institutional device that made the Swiss miracle of multicultural integration possible. Nevertheless, we argue that federalism as such is an imperfect arrangement for the protection of minorities.

First, federalism never protects all minorities, but only the territorially concentrated segments able to constitute a political majority in a subnational unit (Linder 2002a; Fleiner et al. 2002). The ethno-linguistic minorities fulfil this criterion and are thus well protected at the national level. But many minorities—for example, non-Christian religions or foreigners, which account for almost 20 per cent of the Swiss population—were never protected by Swiss federalism because they are dispersed all over the country. Second, the model of integration of the four national languages does not exist at the level of the cantons, which are mostly monolingual. Within the cantons there is a model of dominance or assimilation. This means that German-speakers living in Geneva, for example, have to address the authorities in French and, similarly, people from Geneva have to learn German if they want to live in Zurich. This is why—especially in bilingual cantons—additional institutions are required to protect ethno-linguistic minorities within the cantons.

In addition, small cantons are overrepresented in the Council of States, which would appear to lead to the protection of minorities. However, in the Swiss political system this is actually not the case for the ethno-linguistic minorities. Federalism protects the interests of the small cantons in particular, which are predominantly German-speaking and rural. These 13 cantons representing only 20 per cent of the Swiss population are clearly overrepresented and thus have a very strong position. This is demonstrated in the decisions made by the Council of States and also in the popular votes where a double majority is needed. In these cases, a majority of the 13 small cantons can block a democratic majority of 80 per cent of the citizens.

IV. National Policies of Public Services: Between Non-Discrimination and Equalization

The institutional arrangements in Switzerland are conceived to guarantee the non-discrimination, participation and representation of the different cultural minorities at all levels of the political system. With regard to the political input to the system, structural minorities and their interests are quite well developed. Subsequently, the question can be raised whether

similar conditions are relevant to the output level of the political system in Switzerland that already exists in public policies and services.

Behind public services lies the idea of a state that is obligated to provide public goods to its citizens. This may be necessary for two reasons. First, some goods are not provided by the private sector in sufficient amounts, therefore the state has to ensure such availability. And second, in some cases it is considered important that a particular good is excluded from the market mechanism for political reasons. This can be done if the state provides the good and thus controls the production and pricing. Typical examples of such public goods that should be available to everyone are social services, pension systems, health insurances or education. Hence, in order to guarantee health insurance or a primary education to everyone, public intervention is needed.

In the context of minority protection, two aspects are important. First, public services are a means to equalization because it provides access to a good to everyone, including to those segments of the population that would otherwise be excluded by the market mechanism. Second, the content of a policy or service supplied by the state is determined politically, meaning that once again the inclusion and power of the different cultural, ethnic and societal groups play an important role in non-discrimination and equalization.

Three basic principles of Swiss public policy

The Swiss method of providing public services is centred on three basic principles that highly influence public policy in Switzerland.

Basic principle 1: Contribution and benefit

Most of the Swiss public policy relies on the idea that people have to contribute to a policy in order to benefit from it. A typical example is unemployment insurance: if employees lose their job, they only receive unemployment benefits if they have paid contributions for a certain period of time. Mutuality plays an important role in Swiss public policy. It is the idea that those who have paid into the system and thus helped to finance others are then protected themselves, whereas "outsiders" cannot count on support. This principle has to be seen against the historical background, since in the period before nation building public services were organized and distributed in a decentralized and mostly private way. If a state and subsequent state-provided public services did not exist, then people had to organize themselves. Similar to a club, the benefits and privileges were limited to the participating and contributing members.

Later, the provision of public services was considered the state's responsibility, which led to nationalization of the private activities in several areas. In particular, two consequences of this development should be mentioned. First, the nationalization of public services meant that participation became compulsory for everyone, which to a certain extent reduced social inequality between the insiders and outsiders. Second, nationalization was accompanied by centralization, and therefore led to an equalization of contributions and benefits. Nevertheless, the effects of these improvements were limited. On the one hand, the unification could only be obtained at the level of minimum standards and as a compromise between liberal and social forces. A typical example is that the cantons were obliged to provide nine years of free primary education. Furthermore, in several cases even this process took time—for instance, obligatory health insurance was introduced only in the 1990s. On the other hand, the unification was also characterized by diverging interests—in the first line by the conflict between federalist and centralizing forces. As a result, the equalization effect was limited and differences remained. However, it is important to note that these inequalities must not be considered as ethnic discrimination, but instead the expression of local or cantonal autonomy and limited nationalization.

In spite of these developments, the principle idea of mutuality was maintained with only three exceptions:

1. Primary education: Benefits without contribution

    From a social point of view, the system of mutuality can be questioned because an individual who does not fulfil the requirements and thus is not supported by the benefits will probably resort to the social services—for instance, in the case of unemployment insurance. While in most of the areas of social policy this is acceptable, the principle of "contributions for benefits" does not apply to primary education. Contrary to the other public policies, the idea that primary education should be free of charge and accessible to all remains uncontested. Simultaneously, the Swiss (primary) education system is solely a cantonal and communal task. The Constitution only requires that "the cantons provide sufficient basic education". A compromise between the different cantonal interests for federal legislation on this issue could not be reached and therefore the education systems and the expenses vary considerably between the cantons (Freitag and Bühlmann 2003). At the very least, the federalist solution can be considered a result of the mutual respect for different concerns.

2. Women until 1971: Social inequalities based on gender

    Historically, the most obviously discriminated minority is Swiss women. Until the 1970s, the right to vote was limited to men—an example of an imperfect democracy. While in the nineteenth century Switzerland had been one of the first countries to become a democracy that was free of census restrictions, the realization of women's equal rights was a long and difficult process. In the twentieth century, Swiss men denied suffrage to women several times, but finally in 1971 Swiss women received the right to vote. Still, it took another 10 years to achieve equal rights and constitutional protection against discrimination of women. In 1981, a constitutional amendment stipulated equal treatment and wage equality for women, and legislation in the 1990s has eliminated all legal inequalities (Linder 1999). However, informally, at least, there is still some discrimination, as women often earn less than men for the same work.

    With respect to social policy, inequality was generally associated with disadvantages. The lack of political rights of women until 1971 proved a severe discrimination since all men and all minorities could participate through elections and voting, while women were excluded from both. Without a political voice, women suffered from many inequalities in legislation and social services. While women were required to contribute to social insurances, they were often excluded from benefiting from them. Nevertheless, in specific cases the gender-based inequalities favoured women, for example in the state pension system—*Alters-und Hinterlassenenversicherung*. A good part of the female population was unemployed and therefore did not contribute to the insurance system. Nonetheless women benefited from the insurance when they reached the legal retirement age or if they were widowed.

3. Foreigners: Taxation without representation

    Participation in public policy depends on political rights and citizenship. Similar to the situation of Swiss women before 1971, until today foreign residents are excluded from participation. And like women, this meant that they are included in most mechanisms of the policy, but are not allowed to express their concerns. In other words, they are taxed but not represented.

    However, with regard to social insurances, foreign residents are generally treated the same as Swiss citizens: if they contribute, they will also benefit. Hence, there is no ethnic, linguistic or cultural discrimination, with the exception of when foreigners leave Switzerland. While Swiss citizens who live abroad can still receive state pensions and benefits from the invalidity (disability) insurance if they fulfil the contribution criteria, this is not always true for foreigners. The transfer of benefits depends on an agreement between

Switzerland and the home country. If no such accord has been signed, foreign residents who leave the country lose their right to benefits from the social insurance in Switzerland. However, since the contributions that they paid in Switzerland will be returned, the discriminatory effect is considered limited. In addition, there are special cases where foreigners can benefit from the social security system without contribution. The public welfare authorities (social assistance) support destitute asylum seekers, temporarily admitted persons, those in need of protection and recognized refugees. These individuals receive subsistence level benefits and are insured against illness.[7]

Basic principle 2: Subsidiarity

Public policy in Switzerland is marked by the principle of subsidiarity. This means that public intervention and providing public services should only occur in situations where the society is not able to solve a problem or achieve a goal. Subsidiarity is not primarily a structural element of the Swiss political system, but an expression of the dominant political and cultural values, where liberal and decentralized solutions are preferred. This strong preference for "small government" and subsidiarity corresponds to the historical "bottom up" process of Swiss nation building: the central government should not meddle in things that the cantons are capable of dealing with themselves and the cantons should not bother with problems that the municipalities can handle (see basic principle 3).

Actually, these values substantially influenced the development of the Swiss welfare state. While at the end of the nineteenth century, most of the European countries began to install a welfare state, which was designed to support not only the poorest, but also the population in general and the middle class in particular, in Switzerland the high value of society's self-organization prevented a similar development. Thus, originally Switzerland was, and to a certain extent is still known to be, a liberal and a rather limited welfare state (Cattacin and Tattini 1999). A historical example of subsidiarity is the education system, which was based on private (Catholic) schools in the middle of the nineteenth century. Later, the liberal forces advocated the adoption of public schools in order to ensure free primary education for all children. In contrast, similar efforts could not be achieved in higher education, where lower social classes are still discriminated against for financial and other reasons.

This demonstrates that the crucial question concerning subsidiarity—of whether society is able to organize itself in a certain field or not—continues in many cases to be a controversial political issue. In Switzerland, with powerful liberal bourgeois forces, the common answer to this question is "yes", and, as a result, social equality for the lower social classes is not an important issue in Swiss politics. Political scientists interpret this failure of the lower social classes to bring forth their interests as possibly due to their inability to organize and intention to refuse an important service to the system (Olson 1965). This is, for example, quite different for farmers, who in comparison to their number, have an impressive influence in Switzerland. They are not only organized in professional associations, which give them a collective voice, but they are also strengthened by the fact that their refusal to produce would have serious consequences for society. Over the years, when agricultural policy was under pressure from the World Trade Organization, farmers were for the most part respected, even if they were few in number. This reasoning shows a second limitation of the principle of subsidiarity: within the restrictions of a liberal majority, it can be used as a legitimate way to not provide equitable public policies.

Basic principle 3: Bottom-up organization

As in Swiss nation building and the political system, the idea of bottom-up organization is also pursued in public policy. The federal state has limited authority in regulating public policy, while the cantons have a wide scope to implement a policy. As a result, the design of a specific policy depends substantially on the preferences and possibilities of a specific canton; thus there are 26 cantonal systems, rather than one national system. Again, this type of organization is

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[7]   www.bff.admin.ch/englisch/asyl4e.htm, accessed in January 2005.

mainly an expression of the political-cultural values of the (German-speaking) majority, which favours not only liberal but also federal solutions (Linder 1999),[8] and thus often prevents the development of nationally controlled polices.

From the point of view of minority protection, bottom-up organization offers opportunities to live "differently", and to back regional traditions and culture by providing subnational governmental regulations, services and facilities. It can even mean indifference to neighbours, which considerably reduces the potential for conflict (Linder 1998). It should be noted that there is a discrepancy in the bottom-up principle as an effective instrument of non-discrimination and equalization. In fact, the consequent practice of bottom-up organization can lead to solutions that are ineffective because the lowest federal level defines the solution to a problem (Linder 1998). Again, there is the example of the education system, where each canton still creates its own teaching syllabus, making it difficult in many cases for families to change domicile.

Furthermore, the bottom-up principle is contrary to the idea of equal treatment of every Swiss citizen and foreigner, and overlooks inequality between the inhabitants of different cantons or communes. For instance, some cantons—mainly French-speaking—have installed unemployment assistance (*Arbeitslosenhilfe*), which provides additional support for jobless people who can no longer benefit from federal unemployment insurance and have been living in the canton for a certain period of time (Wyss 1999). Other cantons do not have a similar institution. As a consequence, jobless people in a similar position are treated differently depending on their resident canton; this applies to Swiss citizens as well as to foreigners. Nevertheless, it would be wrong to refer to this inequality as discrimination. In fact, to prevent this regional inequality, nationally regulated and implemented policies would be required, which—as we have previously noted—are difficult to implement without offending specific regional cultural and political values. In this sense, inequality must be seen as the accepted cost in order to guarantee self-determination—and thus non-discrimination—of the different cantonal preferences.

Between non-discrimination and equalization: A trade-off

On the one hand, equalizing policies for the different cantons and regions are at the core of Swiss "cooperative federalism", which follows the idea of a commonwealth of mutuality for all regions. On the other hand, the diverging cantonal interests and the preference of the various linguistic and cultural groups to express their political differences make it difficult in many cases to find an equalizing federal solution suitable to all. Hence, public policy in Switzerland must be considered in this contradiction.

The example of the Swiss welfare state suitably illustrates that there is a trade-off between equalization and regional autonomy. Non-discrimination requires being responsive to the diverging interests and requests of the different cultural, societal and ethnic groups. But at the same time, these same individual or regional solutions make it difficult to attain equalization of these groups, or even induce inequality between them. Actually, it is not possible to maximize both regional political autonomy and equalization. Rather, it is a question of political preferences and interests, and whether one or the other element is prioritized.

In view of these three basic principles of Swiss social policy, it becomes evident that non-discrimination of cultural minorities—and even more important, political autonomy—clearly dominates in Switzerland. Not only the political institutions, but also the Swiss political culture set a high value on the self-determination of the different minorities in the sense that uniform rules are applied only cautiously. The equalization effect in terms of equivalent living conditions, however, is often limited to the federal directive that the cantons should be active in a particular policy. Hence, the centre of Swiss public policy is a "peaceful side-by-side" arrangement rather than a real "living together" one. Most Swiss would not see this as a failure

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[8]   The idea of subsidiarity is somewhat less supported in the Latin cantons (Linder 1999).

of Swiss public policy, rather they see the lack of equalization as the expression of different political preferences and of a high regard for political autonomy and self-determination.

The question of foreigners

While the historical ethno-linguistic or religious minorities do not induce serious political problems, another minority—the foreign residents—regularly causes political discussion. The question of immigration, foreign workers and asylum seekers is one of the most controversial issues in today's political debate. The Swiss public services as related to public goods do not discriminate against foreigners. Generally, they are treated like Swiss citizens in respect to the conditions and availability of insurance benefits. Nevertheless, while foreign residents are not formally discriminated against, informal discrimination exists, at least at the societal level.

From the 1960s onward, the fast-growing Swiss economy needed more labourers. Workers first came from Austria, France, Germany and Italy and later from Portugal, Spain, Turkey and Yugoslavia and found work in Switzerland. Today, foreigners account for about a million and a half, or more than 20 per cent, of the total population (BFS 2002), and most of them work in jobs that the Swiss avoid if they can. Due to their generally lower qualifications, foreigners often have no other choice than to accept unattractive and badly paid jobs. Thus, Switzerland follows a kind of two-class model, where the foreigners constitute the lower class of society. Inevitably, this affects the relations between Swiss citizens and foreign residents. The arrival of refugees from developing countries has created severe political tensions. Xenophobic parties and groups arose and brought pressure on the political authorities to restrict immigration and to protect against the "alienation" of Swiss society. In popular votes concerning this subject, these groups repeatedly persuaded a substantial number of people to support their projects. Recently, a popular initiative that sought to prohibit immigration of asylum seekers arriving from a "secure" developing country was rejected by a close 50.1 per cent versus 49.9 per cent of the voters.

Debates make clear that the integration of foreigners in the same way as the native minority groups of the past is much more difficult. One reason may be that it takes more effort than simple peaceful coexistence. Contrary to what happened in the past, it means the integration of non-European cultural patterns, values, religions and ways of thinking. Even if formal policies concerning education, for example, are designed to provide integration, this is very demanding. Every child in Switzerland, independent of citizenship, has the right to attend school. However, foreign children, who are not able to speak the official language properly, lack the same chance of promotion and success as Swiss children, although formally they are considered equal. Again, this evidence that, although formal discrimination is not sanctioned, there is indirect, social discrimination. This is not only the case in education or employment, but in all areas where lower social stratification and ethnic characteristics coincide. Here, structural and social disadvantages and negative attitudes of the two class levels conflict and lead to a perception of foreigners that further hinders their social and political integration.

Conclusion

Today, Switzerland is known as a country with outstanding political stability and the absence of serious societal conflicts. However, this paper demonstrates that Switzerland is not a country without conflicts. While, historically, the acknowledgement of cultural and societal differences between regions advanced the process of nation building, some societal cleavages remain, playing an important role in Swiss politics. Hence, this paper draws attention to how Switzerland handles the diverging interests of its regional, cultural and social minorities.

Clearly, the political institutions that allow for the integration of structural minorities and different interests are a core element of the Swiss success. Initially, the three principle components of the Swiss consensus democracy—federalism, proportional representation and direct democracy—must be considered. While federalism grants substantial autonomy and self-

determination to the Swiss cantons, proportional representation assures that not only the majority, but also different minority groups have access to important positions and decisions. Furthermore, direct democracy is an efficient approach for preventing implementation of policies that go against important minority concerns. Thus, Swiss democracy is particularly designed for compromise. Without negotiation, bargaining and mutual cooperation, no legislation would be successfully adopted and implemented.

This system of power sharing, for the most part, prevents discrimination of cultural, regional or societal concerns. Almost as important as the factual dimension is the symbolic value of inclusion. Inclusion means mutual recognition as a serious and fair partner. Ongoing negotiations and compromise bring together representatives of different groups that would probably not otherwise meet. Political elites develop a common culture, which in the best case can then trickle down.

Empirical evidence with respect to the linguistic minorities has shown that the political institutions conform rather well to the expectations of these groups. The French- and Italian-speaking minorities hold a proportional share in political offices at all levels of the hierarchy. In addition, cantonal autonomy and interest is a top priority. In the context of cooperative federalism, the federal government relies on cantonal support for implementation, which gives the cantons important veto power. And although the federal level defines the guidelines, there is a wide scope for the cantons to implement a policy that corresponds to their preferences and institutional perspective.

From an institutional perspective, Switzerland can be considered an archetype of political integration, but institutions alone are not enough. Equally important as the institutional elements is the population's willingness to integrate the minorities. Proportional representation and inclusion do not necessarily translate into proportional influence. In fact, even when the Latin minority is slightly overrepresented, it still forms the minority in many cases. For example, the Latin cantons never have the possibility of building a federal majority of their own, and in the federal government two or three Latin-speakers could lose against four German-speaking Federal Councils. Thus, despite proportional representation, the linguistic minorities often depend on the majority's willingness to respect their concerns.

The effects of political institutions depend upon specific conditions and indeed, in the case of Switzerland, the premises for successful integration were and are quite ideal. Societal cleavages are generally cross-cutting, which means that almost everyone has experienced being both part of a minority and of a majority. Thus, on several important occasions, the pressure from outside created a feeling of "being in the same boat" and a comprehension that cooperation is not only advantageous, but also necessary for the survival of all. Fortunately, today the Swiss people can build on these common experiences of becoming a nation-state.

Inequalities do of course exist in Switzerland. Theoretically, two sources of inequality can be singled out: discrimination and federalism. Discrimination means a disadvantage based on collective characteristics and a consequence of societal prejudices. Discrimination must be considered as a dysfunction of the societal and political system, because—economically speaking—it is not rational and produces "costs" for the society. An example of this phenomenon is women's wage discrimination since in many cases women still earn less than men for the same work. Actually, if employers would act rationally, these differences should disappear. The fact that women can do the same work for less money should encourage employers to only employ women and as a consequence men's wages would decrease until the women's wage level is reached. However, if this does not happen, it can be argued that men are paid too much, which leads to a loss of welfare.

As this paper has shown, with regard to public goods and services there is no such discrimination. Public benefits are bound to some criteria such as contributions for a certain period of time, but they do not depend on ethnic characteristics. Even foreigners, who are

discriminated against socially, are treated like Swiss citizens with respect to public services. However, some level of societal discrimination cannot be denied. Even if foreigners have no formal disadvantage in areas such as education or employment, we found a discriminatory effect in many cases, resulting from a coincidence of lower societal stratification and ethnic characteristics.

Federalism, the second source of inequality, is an institutional arrangement central to political integration. It stands for the self-determination of the different social, ethnic and cultural groups, and the respect of their diverging concerns. Hence, federalism is more than pure non-discrimination, it grants political autonomy for subnational units.

However, this respect for different concerns and the possibility of individual solutions actually induces inequality between the cantons with their cultural and ethnical groups. Simultaneously, the substantial cantonal autonomy makes it difficult to introduce equalizing policies at the national level, which can also be seen as an important element of minority protection. Here, the diverging cantonal interests that must be respected are the reason why corresponding policies and their equalizing effects are often rather limited.

Thus, there is some antagonism between such a substantial autonomy and an equalization of the different regional groups. It is not possible to simultaneously comprehensively accomplish both non-discrimination and equalization. Hence, it is important to point out that these inequalities are not as such a failure of the system, but must be seen as the costs of political autonomy and non-discrimination, and thus as the expression of the Swiss political preferences for living differently from canton to canton.

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