Immigration policies, state discourses on foreigners, and the politics of identity in Switzerland

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Abstract. The role of state discourses in the construction of 'otherness' and in the production of inequality has become a major issue during a time of increasing changes in migration flows, of an increased presence of nationalist parties, and of increasingly restrictive immigration policies in Europe. In this paper we examine historical shifts in the representation of foreigners within Swiss state discourses and the effects of these shifts on the integration of immigrants into Swiss society. As state discourses regarding foreigners significantly changed after the First World War, the emphasis of immigration policies shifted from a facilitating to a constraining approach. *Überfremdung*, the notion that excessive numbers of foreigners can threaten Swiss identity, emerged as one of the most influential discourses in Switzerland and provided the foundation for a quantitative and qualitative strategy of defence against the immigration, settlement, and naturalisation of foreigners. In recent years, however, an agreement on freedom of movement between Switzerland and the European Union has been struck, and immigration policies have once again adopted a facilitating stance. As this applies only to citizens of the European Union, a stratified system of immigrant rights has been continued and perpetuated. At the same time, right-wing parties, which have recently risen to power, have successfully used Überfremdung propaganda to persuade Swiss populations to vote against the relaxation of conditions for the naturalisation of foreigners, thus ensuring that immigrants will be excluded from access to citizenship rights over generations. The politics of immigration in Switzerland is above all a politics of national identity.

1 Introduction

Currently, the issue of immigration is one of the central challenges faced by European states, and immigration policy has become a top political priority. Pressure has increasingly come from right-wing populist parties that have emerged in several countries over the past decade. Xenophobic discourses and defensive immigration policies are at the centre of these parties' political programmes and electoral success. In the light of shifting political landscapes, fluctuating national identities, and widespread anti-immigrant attitudes, many European states have responded by adopting stricter policies of immigration control (Kofman, 2002). Switzerland is no exception. In fact, since the end of the 19th century, Switzerland has had a long tradition of right-wing populism, which has mainly formed around the issue of Überfremdung: the idea of foreign overpopulation threatening Swiss identity.

The role played by state discourses in the portrayal of citizens and of those considered unsuitable for citizenship (Yuval-Davis, 1997) is currently of much scholarly interest. The notion of 'discourse' refers to groups of statements which structure the way something is thought about, and the way we act on the basis of that thinking. Discourse is powerful because it is productive. Discourses 'naturalise' and often implicitly universalise a particular view of the world and position subjects within it (Foucault, 1980; Gregory, 2002, page 78). State discourses—the ways of portraying citizens and those unsuitable for citizenship, via official documents, white papers, legislation, political rhetoric, and other documents, texts, and forms of representation (McDowell, 2003)—are particularly powerful discourses. Their dominance occurs not only because they are located in socially powerful institutions but also because they

claim absolute truth (Foucault, 1980). For van Dijk (2004, page 15), the discourses of the political elite are particularly important, "because their legislative or policy-making positions place them in the crucible of discursive power and influence, namely there where discourse is not merely empty words, but has the direct force of law and regulation." Studying state discourse is, for van Dijk, an important means of under-standing how prejudice, discrimination, and racism are produced. He maintains that the socioeconomic conditions of inequality of labour and of colonial immigrants in Europe have been sustained and legitimised by state discourse.

Studying state discourse is also essential for understanding the construction and maintenance of national identities. Unity is an overriding characteristic of the nation and is constantly being recreated by the state through performance and representation (Walter, 1999). State discourses are the official means of representation and play an important role in fostering collective unity and in maintaining the idea of the nation-state. State discourses shape and sustain national identities through narratives of the 'self' and 'other' (Somers, 1994). Indeed, the constitution of the 'self' is centred against an 'other': national identities are produced not only through processes that foster a sense of sameness but also through those that emphasise a differentiation from the 'other' (Valentine, 2001). Policies and discourses on immigrants can be interpreted as "one dimension of nation-building" (Schnapper, 1992, page 17). The arbitrary construc-tion of foreigners as 'different to us' has the function of reinforcing national identity (Tabin, 2004). The study of state discourses regarding immigrants opens a particularly fruitful avenue for the study of the associations between identity and territory, and their relationship to nationality, nationalism, and citizenship (McDowell, 2003).

Switzerland is a particularly interesting case for studying the relationship between national identity, citizenship, and social exclusion. Switzerland has one of the largest percentages of foreigners in the world. Foreigners constitute 22% of the population in Switzerland, which is nearly four times more foreigners than France, and three times more than Germany, Austria, and the United States (OECD, 2005); however, the high percentage of foreigners is not the result of a high rate of absolute immigration but of citizenship laws based on the principle of blood-based descent (jus sanguinis) rather than on place of birth (jus soli) and of restrictive naturalisation practices. In fact, half of the 1.5 million 'foreigners' living in Switzerland either were born and raised in the country, or have lived there for more than fifteen years (Swiss Federal Statistics Office, 2001, page 19, 27). In 1998, with a rate of 1.4%, Switzerland had the lowest number of naturalisation in Europe after Germany. Switzerland's reluctance to recognise itself as a country of immigration and to grant citizenship rights to immigrants is characteristic of countries with a 'guest-worker' tradition, such as Germany and Austria. In opposi-tion to 'classical' countries of immigration, such as the United States and Canada, where admission policies have been oriented to mass immigration with the intention of granting citizenship rights to the newcomers, guest-worker countries have imported temporary foreign labour without any intention of making them full members of society (Leitner, 1995). Excluding foreigners from citizenship has allowed Swiss populations to cultivate the feeling of having a unique identity (Tabin, 2004). Switzerland is also of special interest because although it is true that it is a rare case of successful multiethnic nation building it is also true that it has given rise to a segregated relationship between nationals and foreigners (Wimmer, 2002).

Recent studies of European immigration policies have argued that, despite steps towards the 'Europeanisation' of immigration policies, the national state continues to be the most influential entity in the determination of migrants' rights (for example, Kofman, 2002; Morris, 2001). Indeed, many studies have focused on the specific situation of individual states but have focused almost exclusively on countries belonging

to the European Union (EU) (for example, McDowell, 2003; Morris, 2001; Schuster and Solomos, 1999; Sciortino, 2000; Staples, 1999; Thierry, 2000). So far, little attention has been given to European nations not belonging to the EU, such as Switzerland. Although much of the Swiss literature has focused on immigration policies, there has been little focus on studying policies as state discourse.

The aim of this paper is to address the literature gap by examining Swiss state discourses on immigrants. The study is based on the perspective of critical discourse analysis, "an approach that specifically focuses on the role of discourse in the reproduction of power, dominance and inequality" (van Dijk, 2004, page 20). Consequently, in this paper we examine the role of Swiss state discourses on immigrants in the production and maintenance of structures of inclusion and exclusion, whereby 'inclusion' is defined as equality of rights and opportunities. In order to gain such an insight, our more specific aim is to analyse state discourse as formulated and legitimised in legislation on immigration and on citizenship. The reason for choosing these two sets of law is because they complement each other in defining the characteristics and position of immigrants in society: who they are, which ones are allowed into the country, and what the conditions for an immigrant to become a full member of society are. We focus on 'foreigner' law rather than on 'immigration' law because, in contrast to countries where jus soli is the norm, Swiss legislation is based on the concept of 'foreigners' rather than that of 'immigrants', and thus does not have an immigration policy but a law on foreigners. Asylum legislation has not been included in this study. In Switzerland, foreigner and asylum law are two completely separate sets of legislation, and they are both quite complex. Including asylum law would be beyond the scope of this analysis.

The practical study of state discourse focuses on three dimensions of analysis: the discourse itself, the context of discourse, and the historical events surrounding discourse. In the first dimension the analysis of discourse consists of examining legal texts containing policies on foreigners and nationality, complemented by official position papers, politicians' speeches, and the home pages of relevant government institutions. The following questions are addressed: how do legal texts 'speak' about foreigners? What kind of relationship do they construct between national populations and the foreign 'other'? What are the implications of official discourses for the social integration of foreigners in Swiss society? What position is assigned to foreigners in society? What are the ultimate functions of state discourses on foreigners? In the second dimension the context analysis is based on the idea that state discourses are not independent formulations but rather a result of competing and contradictory forces in society (Foucault, 1980). Such forces result from the diverse interests of groups and individuals acting in various arenas of society at the national and international levels: political (such as political parties, international governments, social movements), economic (for example, industrial associations and industry representatives), and cultural (such as scientists and the media). The contextual analysis is based on the following questions. What forces have been particularly successful in influencing the formulation of Swiss state discourses on foreigners? And how can their success be explained? The third dimension of the analysis, the historical perspective, is based on the idea that discourses are not static but vary over space and time (Blunt, 1999). Thus, the historical analysis examines shifts in policies and state discourses of foreigners in Switzerland from the end of the 19th century up to today. The analysis is supported by a review of published material on the history of immigration policymaking (Arlettaz and Burkart, 1988; Caroni, 2004; D'Amato, 2001; Haug, 1980; Jost, 1998; Kury, 2002; Mahnig and Piguet, 2003; Sarasin, 2005; Steiner and Wicker, 2004; Tabin, 2004; Tanner, 1998; Wicker, 2003).

2 Historical shifts in state discourses regarding foreigners

State constructions of foreigners and immigration and naturalisation policies have significantly changed in Switzerland from the country's first wave of immigration in the 19th century up to today. The interaction of several forces and events seem to have influenced those shifts, including most notably: the country's transformation from a rural to an industrial economy, the outbreak of the two world wars, the postwar economic growth, and the recent emergence of the EU. Four main periods have been identified in this paper regarding the discursive construction of foreigners: (a) before the First World War, a time of industrial expansion during which foreigners were seen as indispensable for the country's economic development: (b) from the First to the Second World War, when a national 'culture of threat' developed and foreigners were conceptualised as a danger to Swiss identity; (c) after the Second World War, when economic expansion required foreign labour and foreigners were constructed as a temporary phenomenon; and (d) from the 1990s to today, a phase of rapprochement to the EU, where the concept of 'cultural proximity' was employed to portray foreigners as either 'culturally close' or 'culturally distant' to the Swiss and to legitimise granting EU citizens privileged rights of entry and settlement.

2.1 Prior to the First World War: foreigners as indispensable for economic development

Industrialisation in Switzerland began around 1850. Up until then, Switzerland had been a poor nation with high numbers of people leaving the country mainly because of its scarce agricultural and mineral resources. Industrialisation introduced a need for foreign labour, both skilled and unskilled. Both civil society and the government perceived foreigners as indispensable for the country's economic development. The positive conceptualisation of foreigners led to an open immigration policy whereby foreign nationals were willingly admitted into the country, Europeans in particular, as long as they behaved 'properly' and did not represent a threat to the country (Caroni, 2004, page 3). The Swiss government signed recruitment agreements with its neighbouring countries, and consequently French and German immigrants entered the country to lead industrial development and Italian workers arrived to help built the necessary infrastructure for industrial expansion. Bilateral agreements were based on the principle of the free movement of labour, which gave foreign nationals the same rights as national citizens, except for voting rights. Swiss citizenship was made available to immigrants after two years of residence (Caroni, 2004; D'Amato, 2001). The government estimated that

Table 1. Foreigners in Switzerland according to continent of origin 1900 – 2003 (source: Swiss Federal Statistics Office, 2004, page 93).

	Total	Europe [a]	Africa	America	Asia [b]	Stateless
1900	383 424	380 719	231	2 107	367	
1910	552 011	547 447	417	2 994	1 153	
1920	402 385	398 459	589	2 862	655	
1930	355 522	350 696	488	3 381	957	
1941	233 554	216 640	313	1 331	701	4 659
1950	285 446	271 948	600	4 040	2 261	6 597
1960	584 739	552 725	1 945	10 828	4 537	14 704
1970	1 080 076	1 042 352	5 113	18 419	9 345	4 827
1980	944 974	889 995	11 039	20 455	23 182	303
1990	1 245 432	1 125 437	24 768	30 357	64 143	727
2003	1 623 586	1 383 352	64 894	59 793	112 241	3 207

[a] Includes Turkey.
[b] Includes Australia and Oceania.

facilitating naturalisation was the most suitable way for foreigners to become 'assimilated' into Swiss culture (D'Amato, 2001; Wicker, 2003).

The liberal immigration policies resulted in the rapid increase in the foreign population. The numbers of foreign nationals increased from 150 000 in 1870 to 552 000 in 1910 (see tables 1 and 2 on the development of numbers of foreigners between 1900 and 2003). Thus, at the beginning of the 20th century 15% of Switzerland's resident population was made up of foreign nationals, a number that represented the highest rate of foreigners in Europe at the time (Arlettaz and Burkart, 1988). In response to the high numbers of foreigner, a negative reaction developed among Switzerland's conservative political and cultural elite. As historians have shown (Jost, 1992; Tanner, 1998), some politicians, writers, and scientists started disseminating discourses about the foreigners' threat such as the following: "We are also being invaded by barbarians ... . Those Slavs, Greeks, South Americans and Orientals are all like big uncivilised children ... . Only, if we were strong enough to impose our culture on them" (de Reynold, 1909, page 261). French and German managers, Italian workers, and Russian students were seen as representatives of a new society characterised as "cosmopolitan" and "exotic" (Arlettaz and Burkart, 1988, page 163). Foreigners were viewed as transmitters of non-Swiss morals and ideas, which threatened the traditional Swiss

Table 2. Foreigners from the European continental area according to country of origin 1900 – 2003 (source: Swiss Federal Statistics Office, 2004, page 93).

	Europe total	Germany	France	Italy	Austria
1900	380 719	168 451	58 522	117 059	23 433
1910	547 447	219 530	63 695	202 809	37 639
1920	398 459	149 833	57 196	134 628	21 680
1930	350 696	134 561	37 303	127 093	20 095
1941	216 640	78 274	24 396	96 108	[a]
1950	271 948	55 437	27 470	140 280	22 153
1960	552 725	93 406	31 328	346 223	37 762
1970	1 042 352	118 289	55 841	583 855	44 734
1980	889 995	87 913	47 570	418 989	32 135
1990	1 125 437	86 197	52 715	383 204	30 172
2003	1 383 352	151 094	71 638	311 957	34 665

	Portugal	Spain	Ex-Yugoslavia	Other European countries	Turkey
1900	74	679	[b]	12 279	222
1910	147	971	[b]	22 136	520
1920	155	1 102	[b]	32 901	964
1930	114	1 316	1 081	27 582	736
1941	63	1 051	648	15 725	375
1950	173	1 212	892	23 741	590
1960	386	13 524	1 169	28 282	645
1970	3 632	121 237	24 971	77 578	12 215
1980	18 943	107 510	60 916	77 393	38 626
1990	110 312	124 127	172 777	84 278	81 655
2003	164 725	78 660	367 869	120 651	82 093

[a] Figures included in Germany.
[b] Figures included in 'Other European countries'.

way of life (Arlettaz and Burkart, 1988, page 163). The 'foreigner' question became a national issue. The debate revolved around Swiss identity begin put in danger.

2.2 After the First World War to the Second World War: foreigners as a threat to Swiss identity

The outbreak of the First World War in 1914 dramatically changed the positive conceptualisation of foreigners that had prevailed until the end of the 19th century. Foreigners started to be interpreted as a danger and the notion of 'Überfremdung'—the idea by which excessive numbers of foreigners could threaten Swiss identity and a term coined in Switzerland—made its way into public discourse. Right-wing politicians used this discourse before and after the war to exacerbate nationalist feelings among the population. Curiously, Überfremdung was the result of an ideological construction and not of a demographic reality. The numbers of foreigners in Switzerland actually decreased during the war (see table 1), but politicians used statistical extrapolations, instead of actual census statistics, to make their case for Überfremdung (Arlettaz and Burkart, 1988). Interestingly, the notion of Überfremdung also emerged in public discourse in Germany and Austria but never became as influential as it was in Switzerland (Kury, 2002).

The fear of Überfremdung led to a paradigm shift in immigration policies. Supported by popular vote, the government issued the Federal Law on the Settlement and Residence of Foreigners (ANAG), which aimed at protecting the country from Überfremdung, in 1932 (Arlettaz and Burkart, 1988). The liberal spirit of prewar immigration policies was abandoned: the civil rights of foreigners were restricted; they were no longer entitled to permanent residence in the country, and, from then on, the notion of foreigner, rather than that of immigrant, was to prevail. The aims stated in the law (still in force in 2006) were to avoid the entry and settlement of 'undesirable' people into the country, to stabilise the job market, to protect Swiss nationals from unemployment, and to control the ratio of foreigners to Swiss within the population (Federal Assembly of the Swiss Confederation, 1931). The concept of Überfremdung made its official entry into legislation language and became the basis for subjective decisions on which foreigners were allowed to enter the country: Article 16 of the ANAG stated that "officials granting foreigner permits need to take into account the intellectual and economic interests of the country as well as the degree of Überfremdung." In practice, immigrants were selected on the basis of ethnic criteria and, similarly to many other European countries, Jews were particularly discriminated against (Kury, 2002).

In 1939 the Second World War broke out. A national 'culture of threat' developed during that time, which aggravated the existing negative view of foreigners. The origins of the culture of threat were to be found in the *Geistige Landesverteidigung*, an ideology that emerged in Switzerland during the 1930s. This ideology, developed by various groups in civil society, was conceived as a mental strategy of defence against the threat of Nazi and Fascist regimes in neighbouring Germany and Italy. The strategy aimed at defending (supposedly) 'typical' Swiss values, such as cultural diversity, democracy, and freedom, and was meant to be the task of the individual and not of the state. In this ideology, the enemy was represented as someone from abroad who pretended to infiltrate the minds of the Swiss in order to destroy Swiss values. The practical consequence of this ideology was a cultural withdrawal reflex which developed among many Swiss and which led them to close to foreign influence and to revert to Swiss values. This attitude is commonly known in Switzerland as the 'hedgehog mentality', which was to prevail between the 1930s and the early 1970s (Sarasin, 2005).

2.3 After the Second World War into the 1980s: foreigners as a temporary phenomenon

The postwar period saw an economic expansion in Switzerland, and a renewed shortage of domestic labour, particularly for unskilled and semiskilled labour. Similar to

other European countries, such as Germany and Austria, a recruitment of labour ensued based on the seasonal-worker system. Switzerland concluded a recruitment agreement in 1948 with the Italian authorities. In order for the government to attend to both the economic need for foreign labour and the fear of Überfremdung, foreigners were officially represented as a 'temporary phenomenon'. Seasonal workers (figure 1) were allowed to work in Switzerland only for a period of up to nine months and then they were obliged to return to their countries. It was assumed that in the long-run, foreign labourers would stay in their countries. Bringing in family members was possible only after having worked for three consecutive years in Switzerland (Mahnig and Piguet, 2003).

Besides the seasonal-worker status (half of the immigrants who entered Switzerland at the time were seasonal workers), Swiss authorities created the one-year status, by which foreigners were allowed to work in Switzerland over the entire year, but permit renewal was made conditional on the 'country's economic situation', thus foreign labour was used as an 'economic buffer' during times of economic recession. Despite these policies that were restrictive in terms of civil rights, Swiss authorities followed a laissez-faire approach in terms of the numbers of foreigners that were allowed to immigrate. Consequently, the numbers of foreign national increased significantly from 1950 to 1960 (table 1) (Mahnig and Piguet, 2003).

The Überfremdung ideology had a serious impact on restricting the access of immigrants to formal citizenship. Whereas before the First World War two years of continued residence had been sufficient to apply for citizenship, in 1952 a new citizenship law (BüG) was passed that elevated the minimum number of residence years to twelve (Federal Assembly of the Swiss Confederation, 1952). In addition, Article 14 of the law stated that citizenship could be granted only to immigrants who were able to prove formally their cultural assimilation: that they were "integrated into Swiss society", "familiar with the Swiss lifestyle, morals and customs", "obedient to the Swiss legal system" and that they did "not represent a danger to Switzerland's security."

Figure 1. Italian seasonal workers traveling back home for Christmas, Zurich 1964 (source: Archive Keystone, Zurich).

This law—still in force in 2006—has led to many arbitrary decisions, especially in the past decade, when prejudiced views of immigrants of Turkish and Yugoslavian origins have led to frequent refusals of their right to citizenship. Nowhere else in the world must a request for citizenship be approved at three levels: municipal, cantonal, and federal (Steiner and Wicker, 2004).

During the 1960s an economic situation of high prices and growing inflation, accompanied by growing numbers of foreigners (table 1), introduced a renewed fear of Überfremdung. The response of the government to this situation was to issue consecutive decrees (in 1963, 1965, and 1967) ordering Swiss enterprises to reduce the numbers of foreign workers and requiring them to obtain a permit before they could enter the country. Such measures, however, failed to reduce the numbers of foreigners. This phenomenon can be explained by Swiss firms' lack of interest in implementing such measures, by an increase in family-reunification migration, and by foreigners having a higher birth rate than that of the Swiss (Mahnig and Piguet, 2003). The issue of increasing numbers of foreigners as a result of family reunification also became a concern for other European countries such as Germany, France, and the United Kingdom, and led to a progressive tightening of controls and limits on family reunification during the 1970s and, later, in the 1990s (Kofman, 2004; Mahnig and Wimmer, 2000).

In 1964 the Italian government put increased pressure on Swiss authorities to improve the precarious situation of the 346 000 Italian workers (table 2) living in Switzerland. That same year the Swiss and the Italian governments signed an agreement reducing the minimum numbers of years required for permanent residence from ten to five and facilitating family reunion. Because the agreement applied only to Italian workers, a system of civic stratification regarding immigrant rights was introduced. The Swiss public saw in the agreement a danger of increased Überfremdung, and a true media war took place. In fact, several organisations were founded at the time with the explicit purpose of fighting the government's immigration policy and of advocating a total stop to immigration (Misteli and Gisler, 1999). For the Swiss public the government's policies had failed to address the problem of Überfremdung. In 1965 the Democratic Party of Canton Zurich made use of Switzerland's system of direct democracy to launch the first popular initiative against Überfremdung (a popular initiative gives citizens the opportunity to formulate their own proposals and put them to the electorate). The initiative demanded that the constitution be changed to include an article ordering the percentage of foreigners not to exceed 10% of the Swiss population. The federal council agreed with the initiative that "the high increase of the total foreign population does bring the danger of foreign overpopulation" (Feuille fédérale, 1967, page 91). However, the federal council also warned that the national economy could not cope with the reduction demanded by the initiative (260 000 foreigners would have had to leave the country) and called the Swiss population to reject it. The first popular initiative against Überfremdung was rejected.

In response to the Überfremdung initiative, the Swiss government issued decrees in 1968 and 1969 ordering further reductions in the percentages of foreigners working in Swiss enterprises. These policies, however, remained ineffective and the percentage of foreigners increased to 16% in 1969 (Federal Press, 1969, in Mahnig and Piguet, 2003). In 1969 the National Action Committee, an organisation created to fight the excessive 'alienisation' of Volk (the people) and Heimat (homeland), launched a second initiative against the threat of Überfremdung. The demands of the 'Schwarzenbach' initiative (popularly so called after the man who was its main motor) were extreme. No Swiss canton could have more than 10% foreigners among its resident population (an exception was made for Geneva) and no Swiss citizen could be laid off as long as there were foreigners working in the same enterprise within the same branch

(Federal Press, 1969, in Mahnig and Piguet, 2003). The debate was extremely heated and the media coverage exceptional. The Schwarzenbach initiative threatened to throw Switzerland into a political crisis and the Swiss government reacted by warning that accepting such an initiative would mean violating international pacts. Three months before the Schwarzenbach initiative came to a popular vote (March 1970), the government issued a new decree ordering the implementation of an annual quota on immigration. The Schwarzenbach initiative was rejected by a meagre majority of 54% (six cantons and two half-cantons accepted it) (Mahnig and Piguet, 2003).

The political turmoil that the Schwarzenbach initiative created was responsible for the 'stabilisation policies' that the Swiss government followed from that time onwards, which aimed at introducing further restrictions on the rights of immigrants. Stabilisation policies consisted of fixing an annual quota for the maximum number of economic immigrants allowed into the country and restricting the civic rights of economic immigrants regarding their freedom to change job and place of residence (permission to move from one canton to another was given only after having completed five to ten years of uninterrupted residence) (Niederberger, 1982).

To the government's disappointment, despite stabilisation policies, the percentage of foreigners continued to grow (table 1). In response, the National Action Committee put forward a third initiative against Überfremdung in 1972. The initiative was, however, rejected by two thirds of the voting population and by every single Swiss canton. The failure of the initiative of the third Überfremdung weakened xenophobic circles and strengthened the government's stabilisation policies.

The economic recession of the 1970s triggered the end of seasonal-worker recruitment, as it also did in Germany and Austria (Mahnig and Wimmer, 2000). By the beginning of the 1980s the absolute numbers of foreigners in Switzerland had significantly decreased (table 1). Among OECD countries Switzerland lost the most jobs, a problem that principally affected foreigners. At that time, the majority of foreigners living in Switzerland were only in possession of one-year permits (Haug, 1980, page 7). By not renewing foreigner's permits, Switzerland was able to export its problems of unemployment. Indeed, foreigners were used as an economic buffer during a time of recession.

In 1981 new political actors emerged regarding the politics of immigration. The *Mitenand* initiative, launched by a social movement based on solidarity with foreigners, demanded the abolition of the seasonal-worker status, the automatic renewal of yearly residence permits, and automatic family reunion (Mitenand, 1981). Economic sectors and the government opposed the initiative because they realised the dependency of the Swiss economy on guest workers. Specifically, the government feared that accepting automatic permit renewal and family reunion would endanger stabilisation policies based on temporary permits and postponed family reunion. The federal council advised the Swiss public to reject the initiative (Mahnig and Piguet, 2003). The Mitenand initiative was massively rejected by 85% of the voting population as well as by every single Swiss canton. A year later, the government issued a special decree (BVO) on the limitation of the numbers of foreigners which were allowed to enter the country (Swiss Federal Council, 1986).

2.4 As of the 1990s: foreigners as 'culturally close' or 'culturally distant' to the Swiss

The 1990s were a period of rapprochement to Europe and marked the abandonment of the seasonal-worker system. Stabilisation policies had remained unchanged until the 1990s. Three new developments, however, started putting their 'efficiency' into question. First, during 1989 and 1990, as the Spanish and Portuguese governments negotiated a reduction from ten to five years as the minimum residency for obtaining permanent status

(Italy had already negotiated that right in 1964), an increasing number of foreigners became permanent residents of Switzerland. Thus, the idea of using foreigners as an economic buffer during times of recession no longer worked. Second, as civil war broke out in Ex-Yugoslavia, the numbers of asylum seekers in Switzerland significantly increased. This created a climate of public unrest. Stabilisation policies had not been conceived for asylum-seeking immigrants and thus the government had no coherent answer to the problem (Parini, 1997). Third, Switzerland's isolation from the EU was seen with great concern by parts of the political elite (in December 1992 the majority of the Swiss population refused by popular vote to join the EU). In their eyes, Switzerland needed to develop closer links with the EU in order to ensure its economic future. They saw that the conclusion of bilateral agreements on freedom of movement for Swiss and EU nationals was a necessary measure to achieve this aim. The seasonal-worker concept, as a foundation for policymaking, was no longer tenable for EU nationals. In sum, stabilisation policies, as practised into the 1980s, were no longer adequate to respond to Switzerland's new economic and political needs.

In response, the Swiss government created a commission composed of representatives of the Federal Office for Industry, Trade, and Work (today the State Secretariat for Economic Affairs) and the Swiss Federal Aliens Office to develop guidelines for a new immigration policy. The commission's main question was how Switzerland could move closer to the EU despite fears of Überfremdung among the Swiss population (Mahnig and Piguet, 2003). The answer to this question was the 'three-circle' policy. Foreigners were conceptualised according to the idea of 'cultural proximity', which attributed distinctive and differentiated qualities for foreigners according to their country of origin. Thus, 'culturally close' foreigners were defined as more likely to integrate into Swiss society than 'culturally distant' foreigners, who supposedly had little chance of integration. Foreigners were divided into three groups: a first group represented by an inner circle made up of EU nationals was defined as culturally closest and thus should enjoy first immigration priority; a middle circle for nationals from the USA and Canada, who, being 'half-way' in terms of cultural distance, should thus have second immigration priority; and a third circle, including 'all other states', which were defined as 'culturally distant' to the Swiss and who were thus to be allowed into the country only in exceptional cases (Federal Council, 1991; IMES, 2003a). The Federal Council accepted the three-circle proposal to immigration in 1991. The decision was justified by explaining that it was necessary to formulate an immigration policy that complied with the EU. Recruiting policies were thus directed to specific countries and were based on ethnocultural stereotypes (Rohner, 1991).

From the beginning, the three-circle policy was widely criticised as being racially prejudiced by progressive civil groups, such as charity organisations, immigrant groups, and the newly created (1995) Federal Commission against Racism. Progressive circles urged the Swiss government to revise immigration policies, to stop cultural and gender discrimination, and to devise measures that helped improve the precarious situation of many foreigners. Swiss firms also applied increased pressure for a more liberal immigration policy, especially for highly skilled people from 'Third World' countries, particularly those skilled in information technology (Riaño, 2003).

In 1997, as a reaction to increasing criticism, the Federal Council created a commission of experts to develop proposals for future Swiss immigration policy. The commission proposed an immigration model based on the Canadian and Australian 'point system' whereby immigrants were no longer assessed on the basis of their nationality but were assessed on the basis of their personal qualifications such as education, professional experience, age, language knowledge, and professional adaptability (Commission d'experts en migration, 1997; Federal Department of Justice and Police, 1998; Wimmer, 1997). In 1998

the government accepted the proposal of the commission but did not introduce the point system. In practice, the three-circle model was replaced by the 'two-circle' model, which improves the civic rights of EU immigrants, while at the same time authorizing the entry of skilled immigrants from countries outside the EU. For the government, the two-circle policy satisfied three aims: (a) to prepare the rapprochement to the EU; (b) to calm xenophobic circles (under the assumption that European immigrants would no longer create xenophobic reactions); and (c) to attend to the need of the economy for skilled personnel from countries outside the EU (Mahnig and Piguet, 2003).

The conceptualisation of foreigners from the EU as superior, and the introduction of a dual system of immigrant rights, was accentuated by the conclusion of the 2001 bilateral agreement between Switzerland and the EU on the free movement of individuals (the Swiss population had accepted it by popular vote in 2000). From then onwards, official discourse no longer defined EU nationals as foreigners. The agreement gave EU nationals, in a system that is to be gradually introduced, the same living and working rights as the Swiss, with the exception of voting rights (European Community, 2002). Thus, legislation on foreigners no longer applies to EU citizens but applies to individuals from countries outside the EU. In 2004 the new 'Foreign Nationals Act' (Federal Assembly of the Swiss Confederation, 2002; IMES, 2004), which is to replace the outdated 1931 Federal Law on the Residence and Settlement of Foreign Nationals (ANAG), was submitted to the Swiss Parliament to make the 'two-circle' policy official. Thus, the proposed legislation governs the admission and residence of individuals—who are not asylum seekers—originating from countries other than in the EU or the European Free Trade Association. Foreigners were newly defined as nationals from countries other than the EU. The term 'third-nation foreigners' (*Drittstaatenausländer*) was coined to designate such individuals. The new legislation exclusively restricts the entry of non-EU immigrants to only those who are skilled personnel, who are conceived as those required by the economy and more able to integrate into Swiss society (a maximum quota of 2000 non-EU immigrants per year has been set).

This history of policies and official discourses on foreigners in Switzerland has revealed two opposing trends. On the one hand, in the period of industrial expansion before the First World War, foreigners were seen as indispensable for economic development, and immigrant policies played a facilitating role or fulfilled a facilitating function. On the other hand, after the First World War, a national 'culture of threat' developed in Switzerland and foreigners were represented as a danger to Swiss identity. Policies were aimed at restricting migrants from full participation in society. During the postwar period, as economic expansion required foreign labour, the government introduced the seasonal-worker system, and foreigners were represented as a temporary phenomenon. In recent years, pressure to become increasingly integrated into the EU led the Swiss government to adopt a more facilitating stance towards citizens from the EU. Foreigners have been constructed as having differential qualities according to their country of origin and level of skills. Table 3 (over) summarises the variety of conceptualisation of foreigners in Swiss immigration and naturalisation policies.

Race, class, and gender have been central features in the structuring of Swiss state discourses on immigrants. Racialisation, the practice of distinguishing certain groups from others through the attribution of certain negatively evaluated features in order to justify their exclusion from equal access to socioeconomic and political resources (Kofman, 2004), has characterised Swiss immigration policies. The racialised representation of non-EU citizens as 'culturally distant' and thus as less able to 'assimilate' has had the function of legitimising their exclusion from the right to immigrate and settle and has validated the introduction of a dual system of immigrant rights giving priority of admission and employment to EU citizens. Immigration legislation, as a means of

Table 3. Conceptualisation of foreigners in Swiss immigration and naturalisation policies (1850 – 2005).

Before the First World War	
Liberal policies of admission	Foreigners are necessary for economic development
	Foreigners need to be citizens so that they can assimilate
First World War to Second World War	
ANAG law, 1931	Foreigners are a threat to Swiss identity
After the Second World War into 1980s	
Guest-worker policy, 1950s	Foreigners are a temporary phenomenon
Naturalisation law (BüG), 1952	Foreigners need to prove they have assimilated before they can be made citizens
Quota policies, 1960s, BVO 1986	The number of foreigners needs to be controlled
Policy of exporting unemployment, 1970s	Foreigners are useful as an unemployment buffer
1990s onwards	
Three-circle policy, 1990s	Foreigners' qualities depend on their country of origin
Bilateral agreements with the EU, 2002	EU nationals are no longer foreigners
New foreigners law (AuG) (proposed)	Skilled foreigners are more able to integrate

the institutionalisation of racism, has also played a role, directly or indirectly, in other countries. Selective admission policies in the USA before the 1960s led to predominantly European immigrants (Leitner, 1995, page 261). Postwar policies in France included a system of differential treatment based on nationality that granted Europeans and citizens from former colonies privileged rights of settlement (Kofman, 2004). Latin American descendants of Japanese emigrants ('*Nikkeis*') automatically qualify for admission in Japan (Higuchi, 2003). In the United Kingdom, Baltic women were constructed by postwar policies as superior to other economic migrants, and blacks were constructed as inferior (McDowell, 2003). In Germany, ethnic Germans from Eastern Europe and Russia have had privileged rights of entry (Kofman, 2004).

The recent emphasis of Swiss immigration policies on skilled immigrants has introduced a differentiation of immigrants according to class. Despite Switzerland's continued need for unskilled labour, skilled immigrants are now constructed as 'the ones that the economy needs' and as 'more likely to integrate'. At the bottom of this claim, which is also present in the policies of several other European countries, is the assumption that unskilled immigrants are more vulnerable to unemployment and constitute a burden for the state. Such a connection between immigrants' class and their ability to integrate seems flawed. In Canada, a country that has long favoured skilled immigrants, the latter are currently experiencing relatively high rates of unemployment (Ruddick, 2004). It seems that as long as discrimination structures persist immigrants will be at risk of unemployment whether they are skilled or not.

Gender has been another central feature in the structuring of immigration policies. Foreigner policies were, until recently, exclusively formulated in male terms with an underlying understanding that those who migrate are males and that women are simply their appendices. The assumption that men are the breadwinners and that the function of migrant women is to attend to their husbands and children has meant that women who enter as part of family reunification receive residence permits to 'reside with their husbands' but not to work. Citizenship law has been guided by patriarchal values of giving privileged rights to Swiss men. Until the late 1970s, for example, Swiss men who married a foreign citizen were able to pass their Swiss nationality on to their wives and children whereas the same was impossible for Swiss women.

3 State construction of difference and the social integration of foreigners

What type of framework have the conceptualisations presented above produced for the social integration of immigrants? State discourses regarding foreigners have produced two types of framework for the integration of foreigners: a 'facilitating' one in the period before the world wars and a 'constraining' one after the First World War. Until recently, and similarly to Germany and Austria, immigrant policies in Switzerland remained part of a way of controlling, rather than facilitating, admission to the host society (Caroni, 2004; Kälin and Rieder, 1999; Leitner, 1995). Rather than promoting social integration, immigration and naturalisation policies have produced a framework which hampers the integration of immigrants as it is very difficult for them, first, to change their foreigner status, because of restrictive naturalisation policies; second, to achieve equal standing in society to Swiss citizens, because Überfremdung and 'ethnicised' discourses put a barrier between immigrants and native populations; and, third, to have equal opportunities of access to a job or a place to live, as temporary residence status and the priority given to Swiss nationals hinder equal access. Recent discourses of cultural difference (such as 'EU citizens and skilled immigrants are more able to adapt to Swiss society') have legitimised a system of unequal civic rights among immigrants, thus creating unequal opportunities for social and economic participation.

The constraining approach to immigrant integration is a paradox when compared with the role that foreigners play in Swiss society. Without immigrants Switzerland would have a population of 5.2 million instead of 7.3 million (Haug, 2003). Today, gainfully employed foreign nationals carry out one quarter of the entire volume of work in Switzerland. In the hospitality industry, one out of two employees is a foreign national. Homes for the elderly and hospitals in the city of Zurich employ people from eighty-seven different nations. Without foreigners, the work of providing care and food as well as cleaning and maintenance would be unthinkable (IMES, 2003b). Despite this, the Swiss labour market is segregated along the lines of nationality and gender. The unemployment rate for foreigners is three times higher than that of the Swiss (Haug, 1998). Swiss men have the highest rate of economic participation, occupy the highest ranking positions, and earn the highest incomes. The proportion of foreign men with leading positions is higher than that of Swiss women. Foreign women are lowest regarding occupational position, income level, number of working hours, and employment stability. Swiss citizens hold a virtual monopoly on public sector jobs, agriculture and forestry, and security services, and 60% to 80% of foreigners work in the processing industry, construction, and services (mostly as cleaning personnel) (Swiss Federal Statistics Office, 2001).

In recent years, however, there has been a growing awareness of the need to improve the rights of immigrants. The late-20th century abandonment of the idea of foreigners as 'birds of passage', the growing percentage of second-generation and even third-generation 'foreigners', and the high levels of unemployment among foreigners have led Swiss authorities to the realisation that foreigners need to become 'integrated' into the host society. The Swiss author Max Frisch (1965, page 7) appropriately put this situation as follows: "We called in a work force but human beings came." At the federal level, the principles and objectives of the integration of foreign nationals were, for the first time, laid down in law by the Decree on the Integration of Foreigners, which came into effect in 2000 (Swiss Federal Council, 2000). This decree made several significant advances compared with past policies, as it no longer requires the 'assimilation' of foreigners, is aimed at creating an adequate climate of equal opportunities, and regards integration as the joint task of society, federal, cantonal, and local authorities, and immigrant organisations. Whereas this decree aims at improving the situation of

foreign nationals with legal and permanent residence in Switzerland, there are no parallel measures aimed at counteracting structural barriers to integration, such as restrictive access to job opportunities, lack of recognition of foreign titles, and ethnic discrimination. Several Swiss cantons have been active since the late 1990s in devising and implementing integration measures at the local level ('*Integrationsleitbilder*') which have often had a more progressive content than federal policies. Their impact, however, remains locally bounded. Further, structural barriers created by national legislation cannot be taken down by local authorities.

Mahnig and Wimmer (2000) have noticed a convergence in recent European policies towards improving immigrants' rights to gain better access to the labour market and to educational opportunities as well as to improved information and dialogue. This convergence is attributed to the fact that liberal democracies are having increasing difficulty with the permanent exclusion of parts of their population. Soysal (1994) has interpreted such policy changes as the response to an emerging transnational regime of norms and rules. Despite convergence, an important difference persists between European countries: the state's will to fight discrimination and to open public institutions to immigrants. Whereas many measures to combat social discrimination have been implemented in the United Kingdom, such measures do not exist in Germany, France, and to a large extent in Switzerland. Although Switzerland implemented an antiracism norm in 1995, and created in the same year the Federal Commission against Racism, these measures do not seem to have had a significant impact on everyday discrimination. Further, policies of opening public institutions to immigrants do not exist and there are no equal-employment opportunity policies prohibiting national origin-based, race-based, or religious discrimination like in Australia, United States, and the United Kingdom. Mahnig and Wimmer explain the differences in policies between European states as a result of each country's particular history of society – state relations. For example, in Switzerland and Germany the state is supposed to protect the interests of the national group it represents and not that of other peoples who do not 'belong' to the national family. According to the liberal model of society – state relations in the United Kingdom, the state should provide an even playing field on which different groups compete.

A further sign of the federal government's willingness to facilitate the integration of foreigners into society was the plan for naturalisation that was submitted to popular vote in September 2004. This proposed legislation was aimed at facilitating the naturalisation of second-generation and third-generation foreigners. Three proposals were submitted to popular vote: (a) facilitated naturalisation for young people of the second generation; (b) great simplification of the time-consuming federal procedure; and (c) naturalisation at birth for the third generation. The Non-partisan Committee against Mass Naturalisations (behind which was the right-wing Swiss People's Party) carried out an intensely xenophobic propaganda campaign to influence the Swiss population to vote against the initiative. Using the slogan that 'mass naturalisations' would lead to an 'Islamification of the country', they managed to frighten the Swiss population (figure 2). The initiative was rejected by all Swiss cantons, except the French-speaking cantons, and by 58% of the Swiss population. Thus, despite recent openings by the state towards foreigners, as illustrated by the proposed legislation on facilitated naturalisation, the fear of foreigners as a threat to Swiss identity continues to be present among the Swiss population. Paradoxically, Switzerland remains more restrictive in terms of naturalisation legislation than Germany, which had passed a law on the facilitated naturalisation of second-generation foreigners in 1993 (Mahnig and Wimmer, 2000).
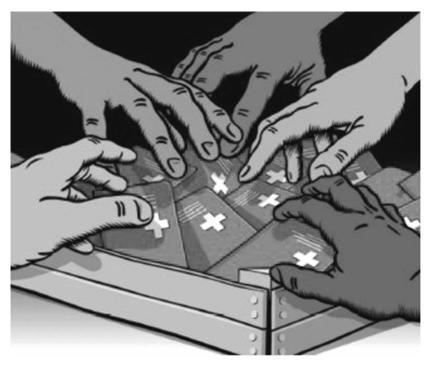
Figure 2. Campaign poster against 'mass naturalisations' by the Swiss People's Party, 2004.

4 Building the nation, constructing difference, and the politics of identity

This section starts with the issue of why postwar constructions of immigrants have produced such a strong differentiation between Swiss citizens and foreign nationals, a differentiation that has hampered the social integration of foreign nationals. Several authors have argued that national identities arise through discourses that emphasise difference from other groups (Tabin, 2004; Valentine, 2001). In order to make that difference, however, a set of uniting common features needs to be available first. Indeed, all nations are 'imagined communities' (Anderson, 1991) and they have been constructed based on common uniting factors such as ethnic origin (*Volksnation*), language, religion, and customs (*Kulturnation*) or civic values (*Staatsnation*) (Yuval Davies, 1997). Switzerland does not fit any of these models because Switzerland has been constructed as a state based on cultural diversity. The Swiss nation is made up of four language groups (Swiss-Germans, Swiss-French, Swiss-Italians, and Swiss-Romansh) with two different religious orientations (Catholic and Calvinist). The constitution of the Swiss nation arose from the union of various local groups to fight a common foreign enemy. As idealised in the legend of William Tell, local groups of people in Switzerland closed a pact of mutual assistance in the 13th century to struggle against the power of the expanding Habsburg family and gain independence from them. This is seen as the beginning of the Swiss Confederation, and the myth of Swiss identity has been constructed around it.

Interestingly, the original theme of resisting a foreign threat has persisted in Swiss history as a uniting force. As we showed in section 2, nationalist groups have used the idea of a foreign threat in the discourses of Überfremdung and Geistige Landesverteidigung and used them to stimulate nationalist values and create national cohesion. Sarasin (2005) has argued that the ultimate aim of the Geistige Landesverteidigung ideology was the generation of a 'culture of threat' by which patriotic

values and national identity could be fostered. The myth of 'Swissness' had to be constructed in order to create unity within the country and to represent Switzerland abroad. Thus, the values of cultural diversity, democracy, and freedom were portrayed as 'typically Swiss' and were used as a 'positive' cultural reference against the supposedly 'negative' influences from abroad. The idea of 'foreignness' as something negative and of 'Swissness' as being 'better than everything else' persisted in Switzerland until the 1970s and has recently made a comeback with the rise of the right-wing Blocher-lead Swiss People's Party aimed towards protecting the 'old order'.

The conclusion from the discussion above is that excluding foreigners has had the important function of maintaining Swiss identity. Right-wing circles have successfully used antiforeigner discourses to coerce the government into implementing policies of exclusion towards immigrants. Immigrant policies have thus become a means of protecting national identity. It is ironic, however, that right-wing circles have been so successful in influencing government policies despite the fact that the country's economic development depends on foreign labour and that economic groups have an interest in using foreign labour. Some authors (Mahnig and Piguet, 2003) have postulated that the success of xenophobic circles is tied largely to Switzerland's system of direct democracy. This system allows social groups to bring their agendas to the national level and to make them the object of national debate. Submitting an initiative to popular vote, public opinion can be oriented in a certain direction thus forcing the government to respond. This thesis makes a lot of sense. The question nevertheless remains: how is it possible that progressive groups, such as the Mitenand initiative in the 1980s, who also used the system of direct democracy, remained unsuccessful in influencing state policies? Our proposal is that it is not the institution of direct democracy itself that explains the success of xenophobic groups but the type of discourses that these groups use. Überfremdung is a powerful discourse because it touches the very core of Swiss identity. As it has long been argued, the concept of nation is the most important instrument for building identity. The issue of immigration and Überfremdung threatens the identity of the nation itself.

Überfremdung is a powerful discourse because of its simplicity. It creates a binary opposition between nationals and foreigners by which nationals are constructed as 'normal' and 'desired' and foreigners are constructed as 'deviant' and 'undesired'. Überfremdung easily provokes fear, and thus public opinion and action can be mobilised. Überfremdung produces an essentialist cultural discourse based on the idea that when two cultures come together they do not mix but one dominates the other. Policies of exclusion towards foreigners have created the paradoxical situation where, on the one hand, the Swiss state is founded on principles of 'openness to difference' and in particular to multiculturalism, while, on the other, when it comes to immigrant populations, openness to difference and to multiculturalism no longer exists. Wimmer (2002) has argued that Switzerland well illustrates the dialectics of inclusion and exclusion: in order to insure and maintain the integration of Swiss nationals into the nation and the economy the Swiss state had to devise policies of exclusion towards foreigners.

The difference between immigration, immigrant, and naturalisation policies during the prewar and postwar period can also be interpreted in light of the changing role of the state. The idea of nationality was used in the 19th century to organise the state and to support the development of productive capitalist forces. For capitalism to develop, the nation-state and the idea of nationality were necessary. The expression of this conception of state was Switzerland's liberal policy regarding the entry and naturalisation of immigrants. Since the 20th century the idea of nationality has been increasingly used to bind and articulate diffuse fears within society, which were generated by transnational

mobility and by the increasing globalisation of the economy. The content and nature of state discourses on foreigners in Switzerland has been tied to the country's process of nation building. The politics of immigration in Switzerland can be interpreted as a politics of national identity.

5 Conclusions

In this paper we have attempted to unravel the largely unexplored history of the discursive construction of foreigners by Swiss state policies from 1850 until today. State representations of foreigners have shifted from a predominantly positive attitude towards foreigners before the First World War to a mainly defensive attitude, which partly persists today, where foreigners are conceptualised as a threat to Swiss identity. Such conceptualisations have sustained and legitimised the socioeconomic conditions of inequality of large numbers of immigrants. In the past decade, as a result of the need to develop closer links with the EU, foreigners have been portrayed as having distinctive qualities, and citizens of the EU have been represented as 'more likely to integrate'. Shifts in state discourses concerning foreigners have occurred as a response to both economic and political interests such as economic growth, protecting the privileged access of Swiss nationals to the labour market, and the protection of national identity. Defensive attitudes and differentiations among foreigners have significantly influenced the recruitment, residence status, and allocation to employment of foreign nationals.

Several events have influenced discourse shifts: the country's transformation from a rural to an industrial economy, the outbreak of the two world wards, the postwar economic growth, and the recent emergence of the EU. Several actors have influenced the formulation of immigration policies including, most notably, national economic groups, xenophobic groups (through Überfremdung initiatives), and foreign governments (through bilateral agreements). Xenophobic groups, working together with right-wing parties, have been particularly successful in influencing the government in formulating policies of exclusion towards foreigners. Centre-oriented and left-oriented political parties in Switzerland have had an ambiguous position on foreigners. The left, for example, has defended immigrants' rights while trying to attend to the interests of the trade unions they represent, which are primarily interested in securing jobs for their members and not in open policies of immigration.

The history of state discourses of foreigners in Switzerland is significant for conceptualisations of citizenship, identity, and discourse. First, it brings to light some shortcomings in the migration literature. Much of the recent literature, especially that focused on Anglo-Saxon countries with jus solis as a principle of citizenship, has dedicated a lot of attention to the issue of transnationalism. Researchers are noticing the increasing transnational links in immigrant's lives and, as it is generally assumed that nations represent the primary form of identification for their populations, they are asking to what extent immigrants identify with the host country's national state. The question is particularly pertinent if we consider the national context: in jus solis countries it is relatively easy for immigrants to obtain formal citizenship. In jus sanguinis countries, however, and particularly in the Swiss case, immigrants are kept in a foreigner status for generations. This sets up a completely different context for issues of transnationalism and the study of immigrant identities. In the Swiss case the identification of immigrants with the national state of their host countries is not encouraged. This means that the perspective of analysis for studies of transnationalism needs to become more differentiated, looking at the variety of national contexts, and at the influence that different regimes of citizenship have on the constitution of immigrants' identities.

Second, the particular construction of immigrants by the Swiss state reveals the significance of the concepts of race, class, and gender for the understanding of state discourse. The racialised representation of non-EU citizens as 'culturally distant', and thus less able to 'assimilate', has had the function of legitimising their exclusion from the right to immigrate and settle and has validated the introduction of a dual system of immigrant rights giving priority of admission and employment to EU citizens. The portrayal of skilled immigrants as 'more able to integrate' has introduced a differentiation of immigrants according to class. The representation of male migrants as breadwinners and of migrant women as their appendices has confined women to the domestic role and limited their access to the labour market. More empirical studies showing the interconnectedness of race, class, and gender are necessary.

Third, Switzerland's story reveals the significance of state discourses on foreigners for the construction of national identity. It has been argued that national identity is produced through narratives of the 'self' and the 'other'. Constructing 'sameness' is a challenge in Switzerland given its multicultural nature. By constructing foreigners as a cultural threat, and by portraying Swiss values as something that needs to be defended from foreign influence, state discourses have played a unique role in constructing and maintaining national identity. Thus, while Switzerland has succeeded in building a multicultural nation (made up of Swiss-Germans, Swiss-French, Swiss-Italians, and Swiss-Romansh) it has also given a rise to a segregated relationship between nationals and foreigners. The Swiss case also illustrates the extent to which geography matters for the politics of national identity. Being a small country surrounded by four large nations has led to a feeling of fragility and a fear of being 'absorbed' by 'others'. In the Swiss case, and especially in times of uncertainty, the discourse of Überfremdung has found a particularly fruitful ground to develop by making use of the analogy of a small boat overcrowded by excessive numbers of foreigners. Lastly, Switzerland well illustrates how contradictory the representations of a nation can be, depending on geographical scale. At an international level, the Swiss state has succeeded in presenting Switzerland as a multicultural nation with a humanitarian tradition, but at the same time, at a national level, it has applied restrictive citizenship policies that have led to the social exclusion of its immigrants.

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