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Examining the Effects of Immigration and Related Factors in Conjunction with Electoral Rules in the United Kingdom, Switzerland, and Montenegro

Measuring the effect of immigration on an electoral process is a highly normative analysis, and does not guarantee future behavior. But by examining various electoral rules, international surveys, demographic data, and present information on cultural identity, we are able to see trends that contribute to the likelihood of electoral swings due to immigration policy. Under a presidential system, with open party lists such as Switzerland, immigration becomes a much more salient issue in elections. Voters are much more likely to show increased support for far-right wing parties with a strict immigration policy platform when provided an opportunity. In states within close proximity to former Soviet blocs, their larger political systems exhibit an aversion to migrant integration, making it an overall less relevant issue for voters.

The United Kingdom

Despite the sheer size and changing nature of U.K. territory, their system has remained largely unchanged since their days of international colonization wherein they installed their electoral system in their land abroad. Within their parliamentary system, they use a majoritarian approach with a Single Member District Plurality (SMDP) method, which determines that their district magnitude is equal to 1. When electing candidates or parties, their only requirement is to get a plurality of the votes, rather than a majority. In contrast to proportional representation systems where district magnitude is typically higher, SMDP systems are less proportional. Due to their closed party lists, the electorate is only able to vote for the party, rather than parties as well as candidates.

As of the snap election held on June 8th, 2017, the hung parliament in the U.K. government is a coalition formed between the Conservative Party (Tories) and the Democratic Unionist Party (DUP). In a Parliament of 650 seats, 326 were necessary to attain a majority. Having neglected to fulfill that, May and her Conservatives formed a coalition with the DUP. The seats filling the legislature that is responsible for holding her accountable are allocated as follows; Conservatives with 318, Labour Party with 262, Scottish National Party with 35, Liberal Democrats with 12, DUP with 10, and Sinn Féin, which is a complicated situation, because despite having 7 seats in the legislature, they do not engage in Parliament[1].

In order to address the various parties' placement upon the political spectrum, it's important to note the party families that they reside in, as well as examining the immigration policies they have lauded or lambasted in the past. The largest party in government and legislature, Conservatives hold a restrictive stance on immigration. The Tories have long since advocated a severe cut in net migration, and to impose harsher controls on companies looking to hire foreign workers. Running parallel to the ideas that Dancygier[2] put forth in her article, Prime Minister Theresa May attributes her party's strict views on immigration on concern for the wealth distribution in the U.K., and the potential for her constituents to experience tensions as a result of economic scarcity. "I want to ensure we are controlling migration because too high uncontrolled migration puts pressure on our public services but it also lowers wages at the lower end of the income scale," she said during her campaign[3]. May would also seek to tighten regulation on student visas, and make it more difficult for people with family visa sponsorship to

[1] Laura Hughes; Jack Maidment; Barney Henderson.
[2] Dancygier, Rafaela M.
[3] Joshi, Amita

immigrate by increasing the minimum earnings required. The Tories bear most of the weight for platforms on immigration policy, considering their coalition partner, the DUP, has little to no public stance on it.

In a stark contrast, the second largest party in the legislature, the Labour Party, has long held a different stance on the integration of immigrants. Led by Opposition Leader, Member of Parliament (MP) Jeremy Corbyn, the Labour Party falls into the category of parties that are typically regarded as the Social Democrats/Socialists; they boast a history of advocating for the rights of the many rather than the few. The British Labour Party in particular has not called for the reduction of net migration to the U.K., seeks to eliminate the minimum earnings requirement for immigrants with family ties, and has a vastly different approach to combating the potential issues of economic scarcity. In 2016, they proposed to organize a Migrant Impact Fund [4], which would help to sustain public services in host communities.

In terms of smaller legislative parties, the Scottish National Party (SNP), which falls into the Regional party family, has advocated for the rights of EU citizens to remain in the U.K. after Brexit [3]. As a regional party, their interests are much more limited in scope and tend to seek benefits only for the electorate in that region, rather than the U.K. as a whole. The Liberal Democrats (Lib-Dems) fall into the liberal party family, which "prioritizes a commitment to a free market & opposition to state interference in the economy as well as in matters of morality" [5]. This indicates a bit of a divergence from the theory put forth by Dancygier [2] of economic scarcity factoring into immigration, which may account for their image as unrealistic idealists, and explain their limited presence in the legislature. Smaller parties such as the UK Independence

[4] Stone, Jon
[5] Bale, Tim

Party (UKIP) and the British National Party (BNP), who draw strong distinctions from each other and offer varying levels of legitimacy and morality to voters, exist in some capacity to voice strong opposition to lax immigration[6]. However, such extreme parties rarely hold a significant enough role in legislatures, and have little to no effect on policy other than serving as a voice of dissent.

The famed "Brexit" vote of June of 2016 acts as an indicator that immigrant-native tension are rising, and manifested itself as a vote that cut ties (and subsequently, open immigration) from the European Union. There are various reasons voters may be in favor of controlled immigration; economic reasons, xenophobia, or the opinion that a homogeneous society will run more efficiently. But although this referendum has elements of anti-immigration rhetoric, it may be more indicative of desires of more open trade, economic hardship and a British tradition of striving for sovereignty. It is difficult to distinguish the most popular issues that drove voters in the U.K. to mobilize for a split from the United Kingdom, and we must also consider the fact that opinions on immigration may have many roots.

Switzerland

Of all the nations in Europe, Switzerland has one of the most unique government structures; one that shows some similar characteristics to that of the United States, yet could not be more different. Although they are a presidential system that is divided into cantons that mirror the division of America into states, the resemblance ends there. Their presidential system is only classified as such due to the lack of a Vote of No Confidence in their Parliament, leaving the legislature unable to hold the government accountable.

[6] Ford, Robert, & Matthew Goodwin

In their bicameral Parliament, there is a National Council that represents each canton proportionally, and a Council of States with two representatives from each canton. The Swiss cantons employ a Proportional Representation (PR) system, with a unique spin on open party lists; they allow their voters an opportunity to write-in candidates from other parties, rank their candidates, or utilize a cancel system that eliminates certain candidates. Seat allocation is based off of the Hagenbach-Bischoff quota, which is an adaptation of the D'Hondt method, and is also used in Luxembourg and Belgium. As explained by the ACE Project, "… for each canton, the number of seats each party receives is determined on the basis of the total votes for candidates of this party. Candidates win these seats in order of their ranking. This ranking is based on the number of times a candidate's name appears on all the lists, including write-ins on other parties' lists" [7]. The exceptions are the Graubünden and both Appenzell regions, who elect their parliament through a majority system.

Their direct democracy (a system that only shows potential in geographically small states and would be nearly impossible to maintain in a nation as large as the U.S.) allows citizens to voice their policy preferences directly on specific referendums. This also has the effect of facilitating a polarized, extreme response from native voters that are independent from the government's composition and subsequent policies. Yet another magnifying force for anti-immigrant rhetoric in Switzerland is the nature of citizenship. In order to gain citizenship or become naturalized, local deliberations take place wherein normative factors such as "being too flamboyant" is an acceptable reason to veto an application[8]. The most recent federal elections in 2015 for the National Council was a cycle in which many candidates had immigration policy as a

[7] The Electoral Knowledge Network
[8] Golder, Sona

primary issue on their agenda. The elections culminated with the Swiss People's Party (SVP) coming in with 29.4% of the vote, with 65 of 200 seats[9]. After that were the Social Democrats with 43 seats, FDP.The Liberals with 33 seats, the Christian Democratic People's Party with 27 seats, the Green Party with 11 seats, Conservative Democrats and Green Liberals with 7 seats each, and other miscellaneous parties such as the Evangelical People's Party, Ticino League, Swiss Labour, and the Geneva's Citizens Movement garnering the remaining votes.

In a study by Brunner and Kuhn[10], researchers at the University of Zurich examined Swiss citizens' increasing negative attitudes on immigrants, as well as their subsequent increase for support of far-right parties. One of the most prominent factors used to evaluate such attitudes is the distance between native and migrants' cultural identity. When examining scenarios in which an influx of migrants were culturally similar to natives, little adversity to immigration resulted, and no credible change in voting behavior was detected. This was a stark contrast to the reactions incited by influxes of migrants that had more significant gaps in cultural identity from Swiss natives. Brunner and Kuhn attributed these anti-immigrant attitudes to value systems that contribute to a perception of migrants as a threat to native identities. Drawing upon data from the World Value Survey, the researchers determined that significant cultural factors included language, religions, or simple customs that were ingrained into the migrants' way of life. The larger the discrepancies in these cultural categories, the more immigrant-native tensions were likely to rise and manifest in elections. In this case in particular, Brunner and Kuhn saw a huge increase in support for the Swiss People's Party (SVP), a far-right party that touts a strict stance against migration.

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[9] Franklin, Joshua

[10] Brunner, Beatrice, & Andreas Kuhn

However, it is important to consider the difference in attitudes concerning immigrant acceptance and refugee acceptance. The most recent election, as seen in 2015, was largely influenced by the immediate 'threat' of large groups of asylum-seekers from Syria and the Middle East flowing into Switzerland. Political phenomena such as this may only occur as a reflex to isolated incidences, and may not accurately convey the overall acceptance of immigrants.

Montenegro

Montenegro bears the weight of a turbulent history, including previous membership in Yugoslavia, and later independence from Serbia in 2006. In 2016, ten years after their vote to establish their independent nation, tumultuous elections for Parliament took place. Montenegro's electoral rules that determine the composition of government align somewhat similarly with Switzerland. Both use proportional representation, and more specifically, the D'Hondt method. However, Montenegro employs closed party lists rather than open ones; this has the effect of ensuring more party discipline, with candidates rarely straying from their party's platform.

As Montenegro operates in a semi-presidential system, the cabinet is the most influential body in government. The head popularly elected head of state is the President, a position currently held by Filip Vujanović. However, the most influential actor in their government is the Prime Minister. Despite a chaotic campaign due to dissatisfaction with the previous incumbent, the role of Prime Minister is currently filled by Duško Marković (best known for being shoved away by Donald Trump for a photo at the G7 summit), who is the leader of the Democratic Party of Socialists of Montenegro (DPS) which currently holds 36 seats. Other leading parties in the legislature are the Democratic Front (DF) with 18 seats, the Key Coalition (Ključ) with 9 seats,

the Democratic Montenegro Party (DCG) with 8 seats, Social Democratic Party (SDP) with 4 seats, the similarly-named Social Democrats (SD), who recently split from the Social Democratic Party) with 2 seats, and other miscellaneous votes given to the Bosniak Party (BS), Albanians Decisively (AO), and the Croatian Civic Initiative (HGI). The last elections were riddled with chaos; 20 Serbians were arrested on charges of planning a coup d'etat on election day, and shortly after the 2016 elections, opposition parties began a collective boycott of all sittings in Parliament, leading to a discrepancy between acting parties and those that were elected.

Montenegrin politics' penchant for regional parties (as well as ties influenced by former Yugoslav membership or opposition to ex-Prime Minister Milo Đukanović), results in a wide spread of parties on the political spectrum. However, there was very little mention by any of the parties on immigration (that was documented in English, at least), and was not a matter on the agenda that appeared to have any influence. As a possible explanation, I examined trends of nations with close proximity to former communist nations as a possible indicator of widespread anti-migrant rhetoric. A recent Gallup poll[11] found that on a scale of 0.0 to 9.0, Montenegro scored a 1.63 on acceptance of migrants, the second lowest only to Macedonia. This is in contrast to the U.K.'s score of 6.61 and Switzerland's rating of 7.22. There is literature that postulates that small Eastern European states have a tendency to be suspicious of foreigners, and their skepticism was only heightened by the refugee crisis. Additionally, 11 former Soviet bloc nations that now create the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) were also evaluated, and had the lowest migrant acceptance rating of any region, weighing in only at 3.26[11]. Montenegro's relative proximity to former Soviet states, as well as widespread cultural aversion toward

[11] Esipova, Neli, John Fleming, and Julie Ray

migration renders it a minimally influential issue. Their size contributes to the notion that smaller states have a proclivity to be more guarded against migrants as well, since Montenegro is joined by Macedonia, Serbia, and Israel in their anti-immigrant attitudes.

Examining Similarities and Discrepancies Between the U.K., Switzerland, and Montenegro

The Role of Demographics in Immigrant Acceptance Attitudes

In the same Gallup poll that found the rates of acceptance of migrants [11], the role of demographics was also called into question. As a whole, researchers found that acceptance was positively correlated with the extent of education that an individual had, as well as their living in an urban environment. Young people were also found to be more accepting of migrants, and the wealthiest 20% of populations generally exhibited patterns of acceptance at a higher rate than that of their poorer cohorts. As per the World Factbook[12], median ages in the U.K., Switzerland, and Montenegro (respectively) were 40, 42, and 38. It should be noted that there is a higher rate of people residing in urban areas in the U.K. (83.1% of the population), compared to the more sparsely populated geography of Switzerland (74.1% of the population), or Montenegro (64.4%). Education expenditures and average years spent on education also correlate to these measures.

Membership in International Pacts: European Union, Schengen Agreements

Comparing the United Kingdom, Switzerland, and Montenegro's memberships and alliances with foreign states could also serve as an indicator of the magnitude of immigration as a polarizing political factor. All of these states have varying levels of activity in the European

[12] Central Intelligence Agency

Union (E.U.), as well as the Schengen Agreement that alleviates participating states' citizens of visa acquisition and other tedious travel measures when taking trips throughout Europe [8].

The U.K., although currently in the E.U., is going through the process of secession after a majority vote on the Brexit referendum. Unsurprisingly, as a result of their geographic location, they are not bound to the Schengen Agreement and harbour most of their border concerns with that of Ireland.

Although Switzerland is not an E.U. member, they participate in the market and abide by their bilateral treaties. They are the only one of the three examined nations that is included in the Schengen Agreement; their neighbors are all signees as well, which eases travel across borders, leading to higher rates of tourism and migration.

Montenegro began the accession process into the E.U. in 2005[13], but the process was halted when they voted for independence from Serbia. As of 2010, they have reapplied and gained status as an E.U. candidate country; their acceptance is pending the domestic confrontation of organized crime, corruption, and suppression of citizens' freedom of expression. In relation to the Schengen Agreement, Montenegro is not included in the provisions, but they do not require a travel visa for up to 90 days of visiting or temporary residence. The varied nature of these states and their mutual agreements with other nations create conditions in which the native citizens will (negatively) perceive foreign migrants.

The weight of immigration policy on elections varies significantly in different political environments. Electoral rules and the history of the state in question heavily influence the

[13] "EU Enlargement: The Next Seven." BBC News

attitudes that citizens have, but their ability to translate their opinions into policy or government composition is multifarious. As mentioned before, economic scarcity, cultural identities, and demographics also play a large role. Ultimately, in a juxtaposition between the United Kingdom, Switzerland, and Montenegro, it has been determined that the Swiss system of proportional representation with open party lists and normative determinations of citizenship in a homogeneous society contribute to the immense effect of immigration on elections. Their demographic factors (including age, education, and urbanicity) also facilitate an environment that would be particularly averse to migration, especially when coupled with Switzerland's travel policies under the Schengen Agreement. The U.K.'s most recent indicator of immigrant attitudes simply cannot be isolated from other economic concerns and desires for sovereignty, and the issue is not as politically divisive in Montenegro as it is in other nations. As a result, Switzerland remains as the state that regards immigration as one of its most salient issues on their political agenda.

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