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"Small European states in world markets" revisited: The questioning of compensation policies in the light of the Swiss case

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Abstract:

Fifteen years ago, Katzenstein convincingly emphasized the specific features of small European states to cope with their external environment: international liberalization, domestic compensation and flexible adjustment to fluctuations of international markets through democratic corporatist institutions. Thus, small countries should be expected to be less vulnerable to the current trend of economic globalization, as they have previously been exposed to international competition, at least in product markets. Like other small European countries, Switzerland also developed some kind of compensation policies, which were quite different from the policies of other small European states, and favored mainly economic sectors producing for domestic markets.

In the 1990's, the liberalization of domestic markets, in response to increasing external pressures, was one of the most important issues in Swiss politics. External pressures, and the changing political preferences of the export-oriented sectors, also triggered important changes in other social and economic policy domains. While much attention has been paid to the recent changes in Scandinavian countries, especially Sweden, the Swiss "liberal-conservative model" also faced important changes in the recent period. In the paper, I highlight in which ways the processes of globalization and "europeanization" affect social and economic policies, which can be considered compensation policies. I analyse three main fields (labor market regulations, social policies and domestic regulations favouring domestic economic sectors) where changes occurred in the recent period.

Zusammenfassung:

Vor fünfzehn Jahren hat Katzenstein die spezifischen Anpassungsmerkmale kleiner europäischer Staaten an ihre internationale Umgebung überzeugend gezeigt: internationale Liberalisierung, innere Kompensation und flexible Anpassung an internationale Märkte durch korporatistische Institutionen. Dank ihrer frühen Integration in die Weltmärkte müßten kleine Staaten im jetzigen Globalisierungsprozess weniger verwundbar sein. Wie andere kleine europäische Staaten hat auch die Schweiz einige Kompensationspolitiken entwickelt. Diese unterschieden sich aber sehr von den Politiken anderer europäischer Staaten und konzentrierten sich hauptsächlich auf den Schutz des Binnenmarkts.

Während der 90er Jahre war die Liberalisierung des Binnenmarkts als Antwort auf steigenden internationalen Druck eines der wichtigsten Themen der schweizerischen Politik. Äusserer Druck und die Änderung der politischen Präferenzen der exportorientierten Sektoren haben auch wichtige Reformen in anderen Bereichen der Sozial- und Wirtschaftspolitik ausgelöst. Während viel über

Reformen in den skandinavischen Länder, besonders in Schweden, geschrieben wurde, hat auch das schweizerische "liberal-konservative" Modell viele Reformen erlebt. In dem Papier wird gezeigt, wie sich die Globalisierungs- und Europäisierungsprozesse auf die Sozial- und Wirtschaftspolitik, die man als Kompensationspolitiken bezeichnen kann, auswirken. Drei Bereiche, wo Reformen stattgefunden haben, wurden analysiert: Arbeitsmarktregulierungen, Sozialpolitik und protektionistische Regulierungen des Binnenmarkts.

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Introduction

Fifteen years ago, Katzenstein (1984, 1985), and earlier also Cameron (1978), highlighted the importance of "compensation policies" in small European economies. Katzenstein (1985: 39 ff.) convincingly emphasized the specific features of such states to cope with their external environment: international liberalization, domestic compensation and flexible adjustment to fluctuations of international markets through democratic corporatist institutions. Unable, or only marginally able, to shape their international environment, small European states had to a large extent to adapt themselves to it. In order to soften their precocious insertion in international markets, they introduced some compensation policies, such as incomes policies, a large public sector, generous social policies or investment facilities. "Far reaching policies of international liberalization can lead to severe social dislocations. Domestic compensation reduces these dislocations and both permits and requires the adoption of flexible policies of industrial adjustment. Industrial adjustment is thus embedded in a broad array of political responses that link liberalization and compensation." (Katzenstein 1985: 78)¹. From this perspective, "compensation policies" are not limited to social policies and social expenditures, which has often been the case among recent publications (Rodrik 1998; Rieger and Leibfried 1998; Manow 1999). These forms of "domestic compensation" can be categorized in three types: 1) social policies and regulations as an instrument of "decommodification" of the labor force; 2) control of the state over specific economic sectors, producing goods and services not only through the logic of market; 3) regulations and subsidies favouring some specific economic sectors and substracting them to market competition². However, these "domestic compensations" should not be considered only as functional responses to the destabilizing impacts of the precocious insertion

¹ For an historical analysis of the industrialization strategy of some small European states, see Menzel (1988, especially the last part „Autozentrierte Entwicklung trotz Weltmarktintegration“) and Senghaas (1985). They both stress the importance of domestic socio-political conditions (such as the broad distribution of export receipts, the competence level of the workforce and the share of political power among various social groups) for the successful economic development of the small European economies, especially during the period of industrialization. These internal conditions facilitated the successful economic development of small European economies, especially their specialization in high value added market niches. Thus, compensation policies should not only be viewed, in a too functionalist perspective, as a result of international liberalization, but also, in some respect, as a condition for successful export-lead growth.

² In a more general and theoretical perspective, Cerny (1995: 608) develops some similar arguments about the impact of globalization on the production of public goods: after distinguishing three types of public goods (regulatory goods, productive/distributive goods and distributive goods), Cerny argues that the major impact of globalization is on these public goods, provided by collective actors, either the nation state or other collective actors. In bringing a new scale for the production of public goods, the globalization process put national actors in increasing difficulty to provide them.

of small European economies in international markets, but also as the products of specific endogenous factors (share of power among different political actors, economic and political institutions, see Senghaas 1985).

As they have been largely exposed to international competition in the products market at least, small states should be expected to be less vulnerable to the current trend of economic globalization. However, recent "adjustments" seem to have called into question some "compensation policies", characteristic of small European states (Kurzer 1993; Schmidt 1996; Swenson and Pontusson 1996; Unger 1997). In which ways the current process of globalization (economic globalization, European integration, WTO) is affecting domestic policies (policy content) and politics (political process) of small European states is the driving question of the paper.

I argue that the impact of the changing international environment plays a central role in the reforms of domestic "compensation policies". Following Keohane and Milner (1996), we can say that the globalization process affects domestic policies and internal politics in three ways. First, it reduces the national macroeconomic policy options, second, international institutions increasingly affect domestic policies, and third, it strengthens some actors and weakens others in the domestic political arena.

1) For the small European states, trade openness, with which they have had to cope for a long time, has not been the major factor which has affected their adjustment strategy in the recent period. On the other hand, liberalization and deregulation of financial markets have played a much more important role, especially in Scandinavian countries and Austria, which relied on expansive monetary policy. In a world of free capital markets, national macroeconomic policy options are increasingly constrained, and national Keynesian macroeconomic policy no longer seems effective in providing full employment. Especially, the switch from a public control over credit allocation to a market allocation of capital weakened the capacity of the state to promote economic activity (see Kurzer 1993; Huber and Stephens 1998; Unger 1990). For Switzerland, which never relied on Keynesian macro-economic management, and has always had a strong financial sector, the constraining pressures of globalized financial markets were certainly not so strong, but, nevertheless, the reforms were also important. This brings me to the other impacts of globalization.

2) The increasing importance of international institutions affects more deeply than in the past national economic policies, which were traditionally shaped only by domestic factors. The distinction between "internal" and "external" policy domains has become increasingly blurred (Ruggie 1995). The "competition regime" institutionalized at the supranational level (EU and WTO) calls into question several characteristics of the postwar development of European states. State control over the economy and regulations favoring domestic economic sectors are progressively eroded through the liberalization

of national markets, induced by the decisions taken in international institutions.

3) As argued by Keohane and Milner (1996: 244), internationalization will affect the preferences of domestic actors and their influence at home; mobile capital will gain bargaining advantages over immobile factors of production (labor and firms producing for the domestic markets). Like Sweden, a country with large multinational companies (Pestoff 1995; Swenson 1991 and Swenson and Pontusson 1996), Switzerland faced a strong offensive of its business community to promote radical changes. In a context of globalized financial markets and increasing competitive pressures, the political and economic preferences of mobile capital are changing and relying much less on the national economy. At the same time their power resources are strengthened, whereas labor and producers relying on domestic markets are weakened (Kurzer 1993; Schmidt 1996). Furthermore, in the decision making process, the actors, who have access to international arenas, such as European institutions or WTO, are strengthened in terms of initiative and ideas (Moravcisk 1994), whereas others are weakened.

These general pressures stemming from the changes in the international environment are not automatically "transposed" at the national political level, but are mediated through various national factors. To understand the process of adjustment of national economic and social policies, we have to take into account internal factors, such as domestic economic structures, national institutions, political power relations or the role of ideas, which shape the responses to the changing external environment. The nature of the "adjustment process" will also depend on these internal factors and on the kind of domestic compensations, which were developed in the post war period. In addition, the globalization process affects differently the various types of "compensation policies"; thus we have to differentiate the impact of globalization on "domestic compensations".

I will focus my analysis on three types of "compensation policies", which underwent several changes in the 90's in Switzerland: labor market regulations, social policies and policies favouring domestic economic sectors. These three types of policies are characteristic of the "domestic compensations" identified by Katzenstein.

1. The Swiss "liberal-conservative" version of democratic corporatism

Whereas small European states like Austria, Sweden and to a lesser extent other, developed a generous welfare state, a large public sector and quite coherent centralised macro-economic management (coordination of wage, fiscal and

monetary policy), Switzerland never relied so heavily on such instruments. From this perspective, Switzerland can be considered as a specific case (the most "liberal" in Katzenstein's books). Instead it developed certain "functional equivalents" in terms of compensation, favoring economic sectors producing mostly for domestic markets: one of the most generous agricultural policies among OECD countries, a very permissive and lax "cartel policy" and a foreign workers policy favoring mainly domestic sectors such as construction and tourism.

In addition to the dependence of the Swiss economy on international markets, three endogenous factors played a central role in shaping the Swiss political-economic development during the 20th century: 1) a territorially diversified economic structure without strong industrial concentration and a sociological diversified society (religious and linguistic cleavages), which weakened the organization of the labor movement; 2) a weak central state, limited in its economic competencies by the federalist structure of the state, by an independent central bank and by the precocity of the organization of economic interests providing various forms of collective goods (vocational training, social peace in the field of industrial relations, statistics); 3) a third important aspect is the dualism of the Swiss economy between competitive export oriented sectors (largest four industries, financial and insurance sectors) and more sheltered ones producing mainly for the domestic markets (agriculture, construction and Gewerbe) (Bernegger 1990 and Knöpfel 1988). This cleavage can also be found at the level of the major organized economic interests³. These three features explain in a large part the specific characteristics of social and economic policies developed in Switzerland during the 20th century.

Despite the high degree of openness of the Swiss economy, certain domestic sectors succeeded in obtaining some measures which benefited them and protected them from a stronger international economic competition: this is particularly true in the area of agricultural policy, cartel legislation and foreign worker policy. These various forms of "hidden protectionism" were the product of the "coalition" ("bloc bourgeois") between the export oriented and financial sectors with representatives of sectors producing mainly for domestic markets (USP and USAM), which emerged at the beginning of the century (Baumann 1993). The integration of the left into the circles of power occurred only later in the 1930's and 40's and they remained a "junior partner" of the government coalition and of the corporatist institutions. In addition to the weakness of the left, the attachment to the principle of subsidiarity in the field of social and economic policies by the political and economic elites explains why social policies and state interventionism remained less developed in Switzerland than in other small European countries. Thus, concessions to trade unions and the left, were much less important (for details, see Kriesi 1982 and 1995 and Mach 1999a and b).

³ USCI (Swiss Federation of Commerce and Industry), UCAPS (Central Union of employers associations) and the Swiss banking Association (ASB) represent the export oriented and the financial sectors. On the side of the domestic oriented sectors, you find the Swiss Farmer's Association (USP) and the Swiss Association of Small Business (USAM).

2. Challenges of the 1990's: the questioning of compensation policies

Despite its profound political stability (the same government coalition has been in power since 1959), the 90's saw the introduction of several reforms in the areas of social and economic policies. Three factors are important to understand the numerous reforms undertaken since 1990.

First, unlike in the 1970s, the loss of jobs provoked by the economic stagnation of the beginning of the 1990's, has been accompanied by a sharp increase in the unemployment rate from 0.5 to 5% in a very short period of time. The "buffer function", played by foreign workers, with temporary work permits, which was central in the absence of unemployment during the recession of the mid 70's, does not work any more, because of the large increase of permanent residential permits among foreign workers during the 70's and 80's. The number of foreign workers has decreased by around 30,000, which is a much smaller decline than what was experienced in the 1970s, and did not suffice to compensate for the loss of jobs. Similarly, women did not withdraw from the labor market, as female employment stagnated between 1990 and 1996.

Second, Switzerland had to readjust its position and strategy toward international markets and institutions. In various ways, Switzerland can be considered as a "free-rider" within the international community. On the one hand, the Swiss economy, more specifically its export-oriented sectors, has long been integrated in the international economy, and their expansion was largely favored by the neutral status of Switzerland. On the other hand, Switzerland remained isolated on the political level (member of neither the UN nor the EU). This strategy, which facilitated the expansion of its export-oriented and financial sectors, allowed the country to maintain a set of regulations favouring domestic sectors of the economy (agriculture, small and medium sized enterprises) and to preserve its peculiar political institutions (neutrality, direct democracy and federalism). With the increasing acceleration of European integration in the 1980s and the Uruguay Round of the GATT, this strategy of insertion in the international community was increasingly called into question. The issues about the Uruguay Round of the GATT and closer ties with the EU, which, despite the negative issue about the project to join the European Economic Space (EES) in 1992, induced large political debates and reforms.

A third factor was the employers' offensive in favour of radical social and economic reforms. In 1991, the top representatives of the export oriented and financial sectors published a "Program for a more liberal order"⁴ which stressed the

⁴ Four years later in 1995, a "second white paper" was published by the same persons, which contained similar orientation, but with more emphasis on the necessity to reform social policies: privatization of the unemployment insurance, introduction of tighter targeting for social

urgent need to implement radical changes in order to preserve the competitiveness of the economy (Leutwiler et al. 1991). This offensive was quite new because they didn't formulate their demands through the business associations, but was the product of an informal group of 15 representatives of the biggest Swiss companies and some economists. These leaders of the business community no longer felt sufficiently represented by the traditional business associations, too much used to negotiate and make compromises with other political actors. This first program, and then the report of the "de Pury Commission" in 1992⁵, inspired the reforms taken by the government in the next years.

The combination of these three factors explains why so many reforms (in comparison to previous decades) took place in a very short period of time in Switzerland at the beginning of the 90's (unemployment insurance, pension scheme, labor market regulations, taxation policy, liberalization of domestic markets, etc.; for more empirical details, see Bonoli and Mach 1999; Mach 1999a).

2.1 Labor market regulations: decentralization under employers pressures

In the field of labor market regulations and industrial relations, increasing competitive pressures stemming from more globalized markets have affected the preferences of employers. They are developing strategies to reduce the level of regulations and of wage bargaining centralization, which seem increasingly successful because of the weakening of the trade unions (see Swenson 1991, Kurzer 1993). "As a consequence, "productivity coalitions" within the enterprise are supposed to replace macro- and meso-corporatist arrangements as business' preferred form of cooperation with labor." (Crouch and Traxler 1995: 3; see also Katz 1993). Even if we can not speak of a breakdown of social partnership or corporatist structures, there is a trend toward "competitive corporatism" (Rhodes 1998) or "supply-side corporatism" (Traxler 1995). As it is argued by Rhodes (1998), some countries, such as Ireland, Portugal, Italy and the Netherlands, recently introduced "social pacts" centrally negotiated by employers associations and trade unions. However these new arrangements differ from former centralized neo-corporatist bargaining of the 70's, and are less focused on wage bargaining than on welfare reforms, organized flexibility and educational aspects. They thus concentrate on the necessity to improve the competitiveness of individual firms and leave more room of

beneficiaries... In the first "white paper", the accent was put on the necessity to liberalize domestic markets, to privatize the major public monopolies and to reduce the fiscal burden (Pury de, Hauser and Schmid 1995).

⁵ The federal Council mandated a commission presided by David de Pury, former high civil servant of the Federal office of foreign economic affairs and then co-managing director of ABB and so, co-signatory of the second "white paper", to formulate propositions to revitalize the Swiss economy.

manoeuvre for them. This led Streeck (1998) to speak of a "functional convergence" of industrial relations to the imperatives of economic competitiveness, with the maintenance of institutional national diversity.

In the Swiss case, similar tendencies toward more decentralization and flexibility can also be observed. What is particularly interesting in the Swiss case is that, in international comparison, industrial relations have always been very decentralized and regulations of the labor market remained very low. Despite that, the extent of collective agreements and the content of the federal labor law were called into question with increasing intensity by employers associations at the beginning of the 90s. With increasing pressures from international competition, and the ideological shift among some leaders of employers associations, the employer's offensive did not face strong opposition at the sectoral level, where we can observe a progressive erosion of the regulations contained in the major collective agreements (CA). On the other hand, the trade unions were able to make use of direct democracy to counter the reform of the labor law.

In Switzerland, industrial relations are characterized by their decentralization, flexibility and the quasi-absence of industrial conflicts. The federal state does not intervene in industrial relations, which have always been decentralized at the sectoral, regional and the firm level. Confrontation has been very rare since just after World War II, when numerous industrial disputes took place. A 'labor peace' clause, which is included in most collective agreements (CA), forbids the signatories to use confrontational measures such as lockouts and strikes during the period of validity of the CA.

Collective bargaining is very diversified and takes place mainly at the sectoral and company level. CA negotiated by trade unions and employers associations at the sectoral level generally define procedural rules, working conditions (working time, holidays), minimal wages, cost-of-living adjustment and some private welfare agreements. Yet, only about 50% of employees in private firms (1.4 million) are covered by a CA. Among the more than thousand existing CAs, the ten major sectoral agreements (export oriented industries, hotel and catering, the banking sector and the construction) already cover more than 800,000 employees, the rest being covered by regional or company agreements (see Prince 1994 and Lopreno 1995).

The real pillar of the Swiss "social partnership" lies in the sectoral industrial relations between trade unions and employers associations and the CAs they negotiate; that's where major changes occurred during these last years (Fluder 1998; OECD 1996; Rieder 1994). At the beginning of the 90's, the powerful employer's association of the machine industry complained about the too extensively detailed regulations contained in CAs and outlined some new orientation of their policy toward collective agreements. With the slogan "social partnership at the firm level", they want to exclude from CA what they called "material aspects" (wages,

holidays, hours of work) and transfer them to the firm level (Hasler and Cappis 1990). A few major trends should be mentioned: wage adaptations are no longer automatically accorded and have to be renegotiated every year, in some major sectors, wage bargaining has been transferred to the firm level (banking and chemical sectors), increased flexibility about working time organization and defection of individual firms from their employers associations.

In a large majority of cases, wage indexation is no longer fixed in the CA, but has to be negotiated every year. About 55% of workers covered by a CA are subject to this re-negotiation clause and only 2% benefit from an automatic indexation (Revaz 1993). During the 1990s, wage increases were slow and just kept up with inflation. Soskice (1991) underlined that, despite the decentralization of wage bargaining, which in the model of Calmfors and Driffil (1988) should not facilitate wage restraint, Swiss employers are sufficiently strong to co-ordinate and to restrain wage increase.

In the machine industry, where the wages have never been negotiated at the sectoral level but within individual firms, the new CA, signed in 1998, introduced greater flexibility through the adoption of working time limits on a one-year basis in order to maximise the use of the machinery during the period of high demand. Initially, the main trade union (FTMH) opposed this measure unless it was combined with an overall reduction of working time to an average base of 36 hours per week, instead of 40. As the employers' association refused concessions, the FTMH finally accepted the new CA⁶. In the chemical and banking sectors, wage bargaining was transferred to the firm level, with the approval of the banking employee association, but with the unsuccessful opposition of the trade unions in the chemical sector (see Sigrist 1996 and Schaad 1997). Contrarily, in the construction industry, the content of the CA remained largely intact during the 90's despite the severe crisis of the sector. This may be due to the fact that this sector remains largely unaffected by international competitive pressures and is characterized by a higher organization rate among workers, but also by the position of employers, which remained very attached to the role of the CA as an instrument to maintain similar market conditions for all firms (see Walser 1996, for the position of the employers). Following the arguments of Swenson (1991) and Iversen (1996) about the breakdown of centralized wage bargaining in Sweden and the role of cross-class alliance in calling into question the "Swedish model" of solidarity wage bargaining, we could express a similar hypothesis about the recent changes in the field of collective bargaining in Switzerland. Whereas in Sweden, the breakdown of the centralized wage bargaining system was a result of the coalition between employers and high-skilled workers in the leading export oriented sector, which no longer wanted to be constrained by the wage negotiation at the central level, in Switzerland, the trend toward a transfer of regulations contained in CA (wage determination and working time organization) to

⁶ The division of workers associations, between the „traditional“ trade union and the more moderate christian one and the employees association played a central role. These both latter associations were opposed to the reduction of working time, the main demand of the FTMH.

individual companies can also be interpreted in terms of the divisions of the workforce and their organizations. The weak "traditional" trade unions, representing mainly the manual workers, have increasingly been challenged by employees associations, composed mainly of high-skilled employees occupying high position in the hierarchy of the companies, which favor more individualized wage formation and are quite reluctant to reduce working time. This was especially true in the machine and the chemical industry. Interestingly, in the recent round of wage negotiations, the employees association asked for higher wage increases than the traditional trade union.

The federal labor law, which provides a general framework of regulations containing provision for health and safety, maximal working hours and special protection for women and young workers, was also called into question at the beginning of the 90's. As early as the 1980s, export oriented industries with high capital investment (watchmaking and machine), had requested permission to have female workers working at night, which was not allowed by the labor law, in order to maximise the use of their machinery. After a first aborted attempt to reform the law in the late 1980s, the federal labor commission, composed of trade unionists, representatives of employers and civil servants, prepared a first draft of the reform. The proposal was accepted without changes by the government and presented to parliament. The representatives of trade unions and employers associations in the labor commission seemed to have reached a compromise on the question of female night work: such work was to be authorised with an increase in free time. At the same time, however, employers' associations were also complaining about the heavy burden caused by such measures, and argued that a genuinely deregulatory reform was needed. Thus, during the parliamentary debates, a small right-wing majority, supported by the employers associations, managed to remove the compensation measures planned in the government proposal and introduced some new measures such as an increase in the number of authorised supplementary working hours and the possibility to work six Sundays per year in the retail sector. At this point, the left decided to call a referendum against the law adopted by parliament. After a confrontational campaign, voters, with a very high proportion (67%), rejected the bill. After this result, the government quickly restarted a new reform process, which left out the deregulatory measures.

Even if the left and the trade unions were able to prevent the adoption of the new labor law in calling and winning the referendum; they were not as successful at the level of industrial relations. Employers' associations wanted to maintain collective goods, such as "social peace" or wage moderation without imposing collective regulations about wages and working time on individual companies, thereby increasing their flexibility and room for manoeuvre. This strategy was only possible because of the weakness of the trade unions at the plant level, which were unable to oppose the reforms advocated by the employers, and because of the nature of the employers' strategy. As argued by Hancké (1996), the reconfiguration of industrial relations will heavily depend on the strength of unions at the local or plant level, and

especially on the "institutional resources" they can use to resist deregulatory pressures.

On the other side, the employers offensive was not a frontal attack against trade unions and "social partnership". First, they insisted on the "refoundation" of social partnership and the importance to maintain the "labor peace". Second, by stressing the need for more individualized wage increase through the introduction of "salaires au mérite" or distribution of shares of the company, their strategy had a strong divisive impact on workers and employees. Employers, particularly in "coordinated market economies", if they want to maintain the motivation of their high skilled employees, need to pursue cooperative labor relations and promote high trust among their employees (see Soskice 1999).

Finally, we have also to underline the differences between sectors, especially between export oriented sectors and the construction industry. In this last case, the employer association remains very reluctant to question the content of the CAs, which play a central role in preventing a harsh competition between firms in the sector. Employers in export oriented sectors are much less attached to the regulative role of CAs, because they are mainly producing for international markets.

2.2. Social policies: the obstacle of direct democracy to radical reforms

Rhodes (1996) highlighted that similar trends in social policy reforms can be identified across European countries. These include modifying funding arrangements, tightening regulations and qualifying conditions, increasing targeting and increased emphasis on active rather than passive measures for unemployed. But, at the same time, Rhodes (1996), and others (Kosonen 1997 and Esping-Andersen 1996), underlined that, on issues of social policy reforms, endogenous factors, such as aging population, rising unemployment or structural debt of the state, were much more important in understanding reforms than the pressures from increasing globalized markets.

In the field of social policies, the beginning of the 90's correspond to a turning point in Switzerland. In comparison to previous years, social policy reforms in the early 90's have been characterised by a change in the orientation of reforms. Until the late 1980s, welfare reform generally meant expansion. In some respects, the Swiss welfare state was still catching up with its European counterparts in those areas in which it was underdeveloped. Since the early 90s however, with the sharp increase of unemployment and the deterioration of public finances, the major theme in social policy reform has been retrenchment and costs containment. Various reforms took place in a very short period of time in the 90's (unemployment insurance, health insurance, pension scheme, disability insurance).

At the beginning of the 90's, because of the rise of social expenditures due to the increase in unemployment, right wing parties and employers' representatives increasingly asked for expenditure reduction. The Central Union of Employers Associations (UCAPS) called for a "social moratorium" (Richterich 1994). They argued that the welfare state had reached a point where further expansion would endanger the economic competitiveness of the Swiss economy. Proposals for social policy reform were also part of the second White paper (de Pury, Hauser and Schmid 1995). In the Swiss case, given the comparatively high level of power fragmentation due to direct democracy and federalism and the fact that reforms require a relatively high degree of agreement, welfare retrenchment can be considered as particularly difficult. Those who loose out in welfare reform have a series of opportunities to challenge the government and to prevent the adoption of legislation they regard as unsatisfactory. The strategy developed by Swiss policy-makers to overcome the obstacle represented by the referendum, has consisted in the combination of retrenchment with expansion measures within a single piece of legislation. This was a key feature of the pension reform, and the unemployment insurance reform (see Bonoli 1997).

Work on the pension reform started in 1979, with the planned introduction of gender equality in the basic pension scheme. Progress on the reform was slow, and it was only in 1990 that the government was finally able to present a bill in parliament. By the time the bill came to parliament, a broad based consensus had been reached on the fact that a more proactive approach was needed in order to improve the position of women. The bill, adopted by the parliament, introduced a contribution-sharing system between spouses and contribution credits for informal carers. But, together with these measures, the new version of the bill also included the more controversial measure of raising the retirement age for women from 62 to 64. This was imposed by the right-wing majority, against the Socialists, allegedly in order to comply with the constitutional requirement of gender equality as well as to achieve some savings in view of the worsening of the ratio between pension scheme contributors and beneficiaries over the next few decades. The trade unions attacked by referendum the proposed increase in retirement age for women. The referendum had to cover the age of retirement as well as the provision for gender equality, which had long been advocated by the trade unions and by the left. This situation constituted a powerful dilemma. The result was that the Social Democrats did not join the unions in supporting the referendum against the pension bill, therefore reducing their chances of defeating it at the polls. The bill survived the referendum obstacle and is now law.

The sharp increase of unemployment in the early 1990s caused a steep increase in the unemployment insurance scheme outlays. The unemployment fund had to borrow funds from the general government budget. The unemployment insurance reform was drafted by a joint group of representatives of employers and trade unions. Like the pension reform, the new unemployment insurance law includes measures going in two diverging directions. On the one hand the financing of the scheme has been strengthened (the joint contribution rate was raised from 1

to 3%: 1.5% each for employers and employees) and more funds have been made available for active labor-market programmes, such as vocational training and job creation schemes. On the other hand, the replacement rate was reduced from 80% to 70% of insured salary (unless the recipient had dependent children); a stricter definition of adequate work was also introduced, whereby unemployed persons could be required to accept jobs with salaries lower than their unemployment benefits; the entitlement period has been reduced to 2 years, and during this period unemployed persons will be required to undertake retraining, to take part in a job creation scheme or take up temporary work. Once adopted by the parliament, the unemployment insurance reform was not challenged through a referendum. The left cared mainly about strengthening the financing of the insurance and the introduction of new labor market programmes, whereas the right was satisfied with the other measures.

In 1997, a partial reform of the unemployment insurance, which reduced the benefits for unemployed (a 1% or 3% cut depending on the category of beneficiaries) was refused in a popular referendum launched by the left. The reform of the disability insurance, mainly focused on cost containment and tightening qualifying conditions, was also refused in a popular referendum in June 1999.

Even if we can not discern a direct causal link between globalization and social policy reforms⁷, the orientation of reforms is no longer expansion, but stabilization or retrenchment in all European countries. Common trends in social policy reforms are mainly due to domestic problems (unemployment rate and aging population), as argued by Rhodes (1996) and the content of reforms will mainly depend on internal factors, such as political power relations or institutions. In the Swiss case, the importance of the threat of the referendum constrains political actors to adopt balanced legislation like the pension and the unemployment insurance; whereas the reforms which contained overt retrenchment measures (labor law, partial reform of the unemployment insurance and disability insurance) were refused in popular referendums.

2.3. Policies favoring domestic economic sectors: the end of some "Swiss particularisms"

With the competition regime institutionalized at the international level (EU or WTO), "competitive discipline" is spreading across all national economies, either through national political reforms or the pressures coming from the competitive and export oriented sectors on the rest of the national economy. As argued by Ruggie (1995: 509 ff.), the traditional distinction between "internal" and "external" policy domains is becoming increasingly irrelevant and induces the "denationalization of control over

⁷ We could object that the globalization process prevents national states from raising their taxation level.

significant decisions regarding production, exchange and employment". Liberalization of domestic markets and traditional public monopolies (telecommunications, postal services, air transportation, railways and electricity), which means reducing costs in order to remain competitive, is a common evolution among all European states. The origin of these reforms is to be found in the creation of the European single market, combined with the increasing importance of European competition policy, and the different rounds of the GATT aimed at liberalizing trade and services. In small European states, with large public sectors, liberalization or privatization measures are taking a particularly important place.

In Switzerland, the perspective of the European Economic Space Treaty and the Uruguay Round, as well as the publications of scientific studies, administrative reports and "white papers" of the major export oriented sectors, highlighted the high level of public and private regulations and the numerous competition impediments on domestic markets, which raised the price of Swiss products. Several recent studies (Borner et al. 1990; Hauser and Bradke 1992; OECD 1992: 68 ff.; IMF 1998) have emphasized that almost two thirds of domestic prices are administered, strongly regulated or determined by private cartels, which helps to explain the high level of domestic prices. These indicators confirmed the thesis of the dual character of the Swiss economy between competitive export oriented sectors and a strong financial sector on one side and more sheltered ones producing mainly for domestic markets, even if trade barriers remained low by international comparison. Exposure to international markets has been significantly mitigated by measures such as subsidies (agriculture), public regulations or private cartels, which have facilitated non-competitive behaviour and protected domestic markets from pressures of international competition. These sectors were put under intense pressure at the beginning of the 90's because of external changes (GATT and closer ties with the EU) and because of increasing internal political pressure on domestic sectors, which are being considered as "rent seeking", uncompetitive and in need of restructuring.

Despite the high degree of openness of the Swiss economy, domestic-oriented producers managed to obtain certain measures, which protected them from strong international economic competition. This is particularly true in the case of agricultural policy, which provides farmers with one of the most generous subsidies among OECD countries (Sciarini 1994), of the particularly soft anti-cartel legislation which benefited mostly domestic sectors (Hotz 1979), of various public regulations and of the immigration policy which benefited mainly to the construction and tourist industries. While full scale protectionism was not an option for the overall export oriented Swiss economy, subsidies to agriculture and the acceptance of some non-competitive arrangements constituted a form of "selective" protectionism which concerned domestic market-oriented producers only. As one commentator put it: "The anti-cartel legislation [of 1962] can be viewed as a trade-off: domestic industries and trades did not get the expected amount of government protection against international liberalization; in exchange, they got a mild anti-cartel legislation that left ample room for self-protection" (Rentsch 1989: 13).

In the past few years, numerous measures have been taken to liberalize and enhance competition on the domestic markets. The main objective of these reforms was to reduce production costs of domestic sectors and enhance competition on the internal market. Most of these reforms were more or less induced by pressures from the international environment (Uruguay round of the GATT and closer ties with the EU). After the negative issue of the popular referendum on the project to join the EES in 1992, the government launched a program, which was mainly targeted to liberalize the internal market. The leitmotiv of the "revitalization program" was: "Competitiveness abroad through increasing competition on domestic markets".

One of the major elements of this program was the reform of the "cartel law" adopted in 1995, which is clearly inspired by European Union regulations. Although the new law doesn't forbid cartels, it provides clearer guidelines and decision making competencies to the new Competition Commission to combat anti-competitive practices on domestic markets. It also introduces a merger control mechanism. This reform faced strong opposition from the Small Business Association; in a first step, they announced they would fight the reform by referendum, but they finally renounced (Mach 1998).

Among these measures, a new federal law on the internal market, based on the principle of "mutual recognition" ("European Cassis of Dijon principle") of qualifications and technical standards, was adopted in order to facilitate the free movement of goods, services and persons on the Swiss territory. This new law should reduce the market segmentation across cantons. A third measure was the removal of the legal basis for technical barriers to trade in order to open Swiss markets to greater foreign competition. In the field of the foreign workers policy, a first careful step was taken in the direction of free movement of foreign workers, but only for specialists and high skilled workers. This measure was strongly advocated by the export oriented and financial sectors, which are looking for better skilled workers and which heavily criticized the former foreign workforce policy which mainly favored the recruitment of low skilled workers.

Liberalization measures induced by the Uruguay round had a strong impact on some Swiss policies, because they implied that reforms concerning economic sectors benefiting from some "selective protectionism" would have to be made. In particular, this has affected the agricultural policy (Sciarini 1994) and the regulation of public markets (Pravato 1995), which both raised opposition among sectoral organized interests representing domestic economic sectors, which will be faced with increasing foreign competition. But, on the whole, the GATT agreements were strongly supported by a large majority of the political and economic elite. The attempt by marginal farmers organizations to launch a referendum did not succeed.

Like all other European states, but with some delay, Switzerland, despite its non-membership to the EU, decided to liberalize its telecommunications sector (with a partial privatization - 49% - of the public operator) and postal services for the

1.1.98, date of the coming into effect of the European directive about the liberalization of the telecommunications sectors. In other fields, like electricity, air transport or railways, liberalization reforms are also in process (see Finger, Pravato and Rey 1997).

Analogous to the changes at the political level, international firms, relying on domestic producers for subcontracting, have increasingly put pressure on them to reduce their costs, including by favouring stronger competition and import penetration, facilitated by the strength of the Swiss franc. Another striking effect of increasing economic competition was the changing role of the "big universal banks", which introduced more restrictive lending practices for domestic economic sectors and have partially withdrawn from domestic markets (because of important deficits in this segment), preferring instead to centre their activities on more profitable sectors like private and investment banking.

These changes directed toward liberalization and deregulation of domestic markets represented particularly important issues in Switzerland because of the specific characteristics of its "compensation policies". These changes meant the weakening of some major organized interests, particularly the farmers association (USP), the small business association (USAM), but also the trade unions of the public sector. In the case of the reforms of the agricultural policy, of the cartel law and the regulation of public markets, the Office of foreign economic affairs, engaged in multilateral negotiations, played a central role in promoting these reforms, whereas the traditional administrative bodies were put aside. At the same time, the USP and USAM, representing the domestic oriented sectors were also unable to prevent the reforms.

3. Conclusions: converging pressures to the questioning of "domestic compensation"

Following Ruggie (1995 and 1997), we can ask ourselves if the "compromise of embedded liberalism", based on the combination of multilateralism at the international level and state interventionism on the domestic front, which prevailed during the post war period, has come to an end. State control over the economy, redistributive policies and collective regulations, produced either by the state or by collective actors, are being progressively questioned in different ways. Common trends among European states can be identified: a converging movement toward decentralization of industrial relations, increasingly subordinate to competitiveness imperatives, change in the orientation of social policies, but without clear tendencies toward retrenchment and increasingly market oriented solutions to regulate domestic markets. These changes correspond to a progressive questioning of various redistributive and regulation policies, which characterized the post war development

of industrialized countries. For small European states, this trend has been particularly sensible because of the nature of the compensation policies they developed during the post war period (solidarity wage bargaining in Sweden, "hidden protectionism" in Switzerland or a large public sector in Austria for example). The scope and role of compensation policies is declining to the benefit of more market oriented solutions.

The combination of increasing international constraints and the modification of power relations in internal politics put increasing pressure on the political coalitions and the collective actors, who shaped the post war political-economic development. These pressures have played a crucial role in triggering and giving the impulse to numerous reforms of social and economic policies. In addition to these direct and indirect pressures from the international environment, small European states are facing, with increasing intensity, socio-economic problems (unemployment, structural debt of the state and the rising importance of the service sectors in terms of job creation), which are putting converging pressures for changes in social and economic policies. As pointed out by Hall (1999: 159): "In response to multiple challenges, the European nations are gradually altering their economic and social policies and the institutional structures of their political economies. As a result, they can be said to be following particular "policy paths" and "institutional adjustment paths". In this process, this is an overtly political process and thus a prime subject for the scrutiny of comparative political economists."

As shown in the three case studies of reforms, the nature of the adjustment process and the content of reforms will depend on national features, such as domestic economic structures, political institutions, power relations or the role of ideas in the inspiration of new economic policies. These domestic factors still play a major role in mediating the pressures from the international environment. In the Swiss case, the impulse toward reforms came from the export oriented sectors with strongly neo-liberal inspired propositions. Their offensive was quite successful in the field of policies favoring domestic economic sectors and in the decentralization of industrial relations, because of the weakening of the traditional associations representing the domestic economic sectors and the weakness of the trade unions in the economic field. But, thanks to the profoundly rooted national political institutions, especially direct democracy, trade unions and the left have been able to resist the reform of the labor law, strongly sustained by employers, in calling a referendum and winning a majority of citizens. The same is true about the reforms of social policy, whose content has been strongly affected by the threat of refusal in a popular referendum. On the other hand, reforms, which were mainly targeting specific groups (agricultural policy, "cartel policy" or public monopolies), were not threatened through referendums. Thus, direct democracy plays a central role in preventing radical reforms and preserving the political concertation between organized interests and between political parties.

In the three fields we analyzed, there are important differences in the degree of change, which also varies across countries. The field where the impact of globalization seems the weakest is social policies, which is less directly affected by the globalization process, than it is by internal factors. On the other side, policies favouring domestic economic sectors seem the ones, which are the most affected by the globalization process, whereas in the field of industrial relations, increasing competition plays an important role, but remains embedded in specific institutional settings and dependent on the strength of trade unions.

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