

RESEARCH NOTE



Torn Between International Cooperation and National Sovereignty: Voter Attitudes in Trade-off Situations in Switzerland

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Abstract

This research note examines voter preferences in Swiss-EU relations. We identify large shares of cross-pressured voters, i.e., citizens who support the bilateral treaties but wish to either control immigration into Switzerland or oppose a liberalization of social protection measures on the job market. Voters experiencing a trade-off between immigration control and international cooperation are mainly located on the Right. Their share decreased between 2015 and 2019, whereas the share of neutral voters sharply increased. Moreover, negotiations about an Institutional Framework Agreement between Switzerland and the EU have given rise to a new trade-off – namely between social protection and international cooperation – with cross-pressured voters mainly concentrated on the Left. This tension has generated a high share of undecided voters. When pressured to decide on these trade-offs, cross-pressured and neutral voters opt for the bilateral treaties over immigration control, whereas they prefer social protection over the new agreement. Partisanship is a strong predictor of these choices.

Zusammenfassung

Diese Forschungsnotiz untersucht Wählerpräferenzen bezüglich der Beziehung der Schweiz zur EU. Wir

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identifizieren grosse Wählergruppen, die «cross-pressured» sind, d.h. einerseits die bilateralen Verträge unterstützen, andererseits aber die Zuwanderung in die Schweiz kontrollieren wollen oder eine Liberalisierung des Sozialschutzes auf dem Arbeitsmarkt ablehnen. Wählende, für die ein Spannungsverhältnis zwischen Zuwanderungskontrolle und internationaler Kooperation besteht, sind hauptsächlich im politisch rechten Spektrum zu finden. Zwischen 2015 und 2019 hat ihr Anteil zwar abgenommen, dafür hat der Anteil «neutraler» Wählender stark zugenommen. Zusätzlich haben die Verhandlungen über ein institutionelles Rahmenabkommen zur Entstehung eines neuen Trade-Offs – nämlich zwischen Sozialschutz und internationaler Kooperation – beigetragen, wobei hier «cross-pressured» Wählende hauptsächlich unter den Linken zu verorten sind. Dieses neue Spannungsverhältnis hat zu einem hohen Anteil unentschlossener Wählender geführt. Wenn «cross-pressured» und «neutrale» Wählende in den konkreten Trade-Off-Situationen entscheiden müssen, präferieren sie die bilateralen Verträge gegenüber der Zuwanderungskontrolle aber den Sozialschutz gegenüber dem institutionellen Rahmenabkommen. Parteizugehörigkeit ist ein einflussreicher Prädiktor dieser Entscheidungen.

Résumé

Cette note de recherche analyse les préférences des électeur·trice·s concernant les relations Suisse-UE. Nous identifions une part importante d'électeur·trice·s «cross-pressured», c'est-à-dire qui d'un côté soutiennent les traités bilatéraux, mais qui souhaitent en même temps limiter l'immigration, ou éviter une libéralisation des mesures de protection sociale dans le marché du travail. Les électeur·trice·s exposé·e·s à cette tension entre contrôle de l'immigration et coopération internationale se situent principalement à droite de l'échiquier politique. Leur nombre a diminué entre 2015 et 2019, alors que celui des électeur·trice·s neutres a fortement augmenté. En outre, les négociations sur un accord-cadre institutionnel entre la Suisse et l'UE ont donné lieu à une nouvelle tension entre protection sociale et coopération internationale, avec des électeur·trice·s «cross-pressured» principalement situé·e·s à gauche de l'échiquier politique. Cette deuxième tension a généré un nombre très important d'électeur·trice·s indécis·e·s.

Lorsqu'ils-elles doivent se prononcer sur ces tensions, les électeur-trice-s «cross-pressured» et neutres tendent à préférer les traités bilatéraux au contrôle de l'immigration, mais la protection sociale au nouvel accord-cadre. L'appartenance partisane est un facteur prédictif important de ces choix.

INTRODUCTION

Globalization, and especially the trade-off it entails between national sovereignty and international cooperation, has become increasingly politicized in recent years (De Vries et al., 2021; Hutter et al., 2016; Kriesi et al., 2008; Walter, 2021a; Zürn et al., 2012). Conflict surrounding this trade-off has long been characterized primarily by a left-right divide, with traditional/authoritarian/nationalist parties on the Right particularly opposed to giving up sovereignty to international or supranational organizations (Hooghe et al., 2002). In recent years, however, this divide has become blurrier. Significant opposition to political globalization has gained momentum on the Left. For example, prominent Labour politicians supported Brexit, US presidential candidate Bernie Sanders expressed strong opposition to international trade institutions, and left parties such as Podemos in Spain strongly criticized EU economic and fiscal policy.

Despite some promising headway (e.g., Brack et al., 2019), research has only started to empirically explore this complex sovereignty-cooperation trade-off. This research note contributes to this endeavor by focusing on the case of Switzerland, where economic integration with the EU is the key form of international cooperation, where the politicization of the sovereignty-cooperation trade-off has been particularly pronounced regarding immigration control, and where Swiss-EU politics have been complicated by a growing unwillingness – also on the Left – to relinquish sovereignty in Swiss-EU relations.

Switzerland is an interesting case because there have been serious efforts in recent years to both deepen and retrench the country's strong bilateral ties with the EU. On the one hand, two popular initiatives have sought to curtail the reach of the Swiss-EU treaty on the Free Movement of Persons. On the other hand, Switzerland and the EU negotiated an Institutional Framework Agreement (“InstA”) that would have allowed for closer, more institutionalized relations between the two parties, but further limited Swiss autonomy. In 2021, the Swiss government pulled out of these negotiations. Switzerland's cooperation with the EU now risks to gradually erode.

The Swiss context provides an ideal opportunity to study how the sovereignty-cooperation trade-off shapes voters' reactions to the prospects of closer or looser international cooperation. Our research note provides such an analysis by leveraging 2015 and 2019 Swiss Election Study (“Selects”) surveys (Selects, 2016, 2020). Building on earlier research (Emmenegger et al., 2018), it empirically examines, first, how this trade-off manifests itself in Switzerland, second, how it shapes voters' attitudes towards Swiss-EU relations, and third, how attitudes towards this trade-off have changed over time.

The research note makes three theoretically and empirically relevant contributions: First, it shows that in Switzerland, as in other countries, the sovereignty-cooperation trade-off has become more complex and is no longer concentrated on the Right of the political spectrum. In addition to the long-standing *control-cooperation trade-off* on the Right between sovereign immigration control and international cooperation (Armingeon & Lutz, 2020; Emmenegger et al., 2018; Milic, 2015; Sciarini et al., 2015), a new trade-off between sovereign

social protection and international cooperation has emerged in recent years that particularly confronts the Left. We argue that the emergence of this second variant of the sovereignty-cooperation trade-off (the *protection-cooperation trade-off*) has considerably complicated Swiss EU politics. This point contributes to the literature on the growing multidimensionality of Euroscepticism.

Second, we empirically analyze the consequences of this development and explore how voters most confronted with these trade-offs – that is, potentially cross-pressured and neutral voters – decide when asked to choose between economic integration on the one hand, and immigration control or social protection on the other. Among these voters, we find a clear majority supporting integration over immigration control, but potentially cross-pressured and neutral voters are more divided with regard to the choice between integration and social protection. These choices are structured by a strong partisan logic. In both trade-offs, voters of the Swiss People's Party (SVP) opt most decisively against cooperation. But while the potentially cross-pressured voters of all other parties tend to prioritize cooperation over immigration control, they are deeply split (both among the Left and the Center-Right) when it comes to the choice between social protection and cooperation.

Finally, by replicating and extending earlier research on the control-cooperation trade-off (Emmenegger et al., 2018), we empirically examine the dynamics of these developments between the 2015 and 2019 parliamentary elections. In 2015, many voters believed that ending the Free Movement of Persons would be possible without terminating the Swiss-EU bilateral treaties (Sciarini et al., 2015). But by 2019, the EU's growing unwillingness to grant individual countries exceptions from its overall rules had put this risk into sharp relief. Our analysis suggests that this clarification of the terms of the trade-off has made Swiss citizens more *uncertain* about the costs and benefits of the control-cooperation trade-off.

SOVEREIGNTY-CONTROL TRADE-OFFS ON THE LEFT AND ON THE RIGHT

International cooperation creates many benefits for cooperating countries (Keohane, 1984). Cooperation with the EU, such as far-reaching access to the Single Market and participation in a variety of EU programs, creates substantial gains for Switzerland. These gains come at a cost, however: agreement to common rules from which a unilateral deviation is not allowed. For citizens who by and large agree with the content of these international agreements, this is a small price to pay. For those, in contrast, who disagree and want to retain the right to nationally design regulations, weighing the costs and benefits of cooperation is a difficult exercise. These citizens confront a considerable trade-off between the benefits of sovereignty and cooperation gains (Rodrik, 2011). Earlier research has identified this group as “potentially cross-pressured” citizens (Emmenegger et al., 2018), i.e., citizens who wish to maintain both international cooperation *and* sovereign control over domestic policymaking. In this analysis, we build on this work by using the same theoretical framework and conceptualizing the extent to which citizens are confronted with the sovereignty-cooperation trade-off in the same way.

In the following, we examine the groups of potentially cross-pressured citizens and those without clear preferences in either direction (“neutral voters”). We empirically explore the size of these groups and their prevalence among different partisan groups regarding both the control-cooperation trade-off that has long characterized Swiss-EU relations, and the newly emerged variant of the trade-off that pits the benefits of international cooperation against labor market protection. Moreover, we show how citizens responded to the difficult choices that Swiss-EU relations confronted them with in the 2010s. The data we use was collected in the framework of the Swiss Election Study 2019. More specifically, we rely on the Selects Panel Survey (Selects, 2020), a three-wave panel in which the same respondents were

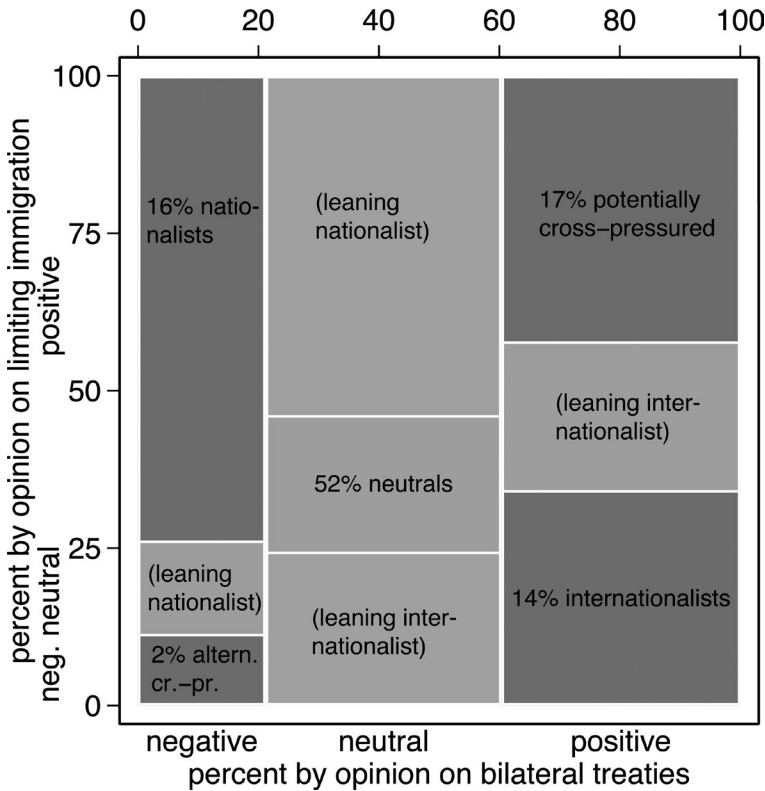


FIGURE 1 Relative shares of attitudinal groups – Control-cooperation trade-off

asked before the election campaign, during the campaign, and after the 2019 parliamentary elections.

The control-cooperation trade-off

We start with an analysis of the extent to which Swiss citizens were confronted with the traditional trade-off between sovereign immigration control and international cooperation. We first measure whether respondents are generally in favor of, neutral, or opposed to each of the two policy dimensions inherent in the control-cooperation trade-off. We use their support for immigration limits on a five-point scale to operationalize attitudes about immigration control.¹ Those who are rather or strongly in favor are coded as having a positive view of immigration control, whereas those who are rather/strongly opposed are coded as having a negative view. Given that the economic relations between Switzerland and the EU have been the main and most salient area of debate over international cooperation in the country for years, we proxy the concept of “international cooperation” with evaluations of how the bilateral treaties affect the Swiss labor market. The economic implications of the bilateral treaties have been consistently highlighted as the key benefit from international cooperation. We code those who state that the bilateral treaties have (very) positive effects as having positive views and those answering that they have (very) negative effects as having negative views of international

¹See Table A1 in the appendix for the question wordings.

cooperation.² We then use these categories for both the immigration and cooperation dimension to categorize respondents into five groups.

Figure 1 shows how these groups are constructed and how big they are relative to each other. Two groups are not strongly confronted with the control-cooperation trade-off: *Nationalists* (16% of our sample), who evaluate the bilateral treaties negatively and support immigration control, clearly favor control over cooperation, whereas *internationalists* (14%), who see both immigration and the bilateral treaties in a positive light, clearly favor cooperation over control. In contrast, the *potentially cross-pressured*, who view the effects of the bilateral treaties positively but also wish to limit immigration, are fully confronted with the control-cooperation trade-off. This group is quite sizeable (17%). Likewise, the *alternatively cross-pressured* are also confronted with a trade-off because they do not support immigration limitation but evaluate the bilateral treaties negatively. This group is very small (2%), however.

A fifth group, the *neutrals*, takes a middle position on at least one of the policy dimensions thinking that immigration or the bilateral treaties (or both) have neither negative nor positive effects. Figure 1 shows that this group, shaded in light grey, is the largest one (52%). To some extent, this reflects our conservative definition of the attitudinal groups. But it also indicates that large parts of the population do not have clear-cut positions when it comes to assessing the merits of immigration control and the economic effects of bilateral treaties. This is consistent with research suggesting that many citizens have indifferent and ambivalent opinions on European integration (e.g., Van Ingelgom, 2014). In contrast to Emmenegger et al. (2018), Figure 1 additionally distinguishes between *true neutrals*, who are neutral with respect to both policy dimensions, and those who are leaning either in the nationalist or internationalist direction. When respondents take a stance on one of the two policy dimensions, but have a neutral position on the other, we categorize them as either *leaning nationalist* (those expressing a positive opinion on immigration control or a negative opinion on the bilateral treaties) or *leaning internationalist* (those expressing a negative opinion on immigration control or a positive opinion on the bilateral treaties). Using this refined differentiation, only 9% take a *truly neutral* policy stance (cf. Table A2 in the appendix).

To get a better understanding of the partisan lines of the control-cooperation trade-off, we next examine confrontation with this trade-off across respondents' stated party vote

TABLE 1 Control-cooperation trade-off by party (in percent)

Party	Potentially Cross-Pressured	Nationalists	Internationalists	Alternatively Cross-Pressured	Neutrals	N
SVP	19.2	32.6	1.0	1.2	46.0	1305
FDP	27.6	14.1	9.8	1.0	47.6	1306
CVP	22.9	15.4	8.5	1.7	51.5	586
GLP	18.2	8.9	18.8	1.7	52.4	765
SP	10.0	7.4	26.7	4.1	51.9	1346
GP	9.3	7.0	25.3	4.5	53.9	947
Other/None	12.3	19.2	7.2	2.5	58.9	1347

²This is in contrast to Emmenegger et al. (2018), who additionally used respondents' assessment of the economic effects of the bilateral treaties on the Swiss economy in general. Unfortunately, this question was dropped from the Selects 2019 survey. Nonetheless, our results are robust to using an alternative operationalization of international cooperation, which relies on respondents' attitudes towards additional bilateral agreements with the EU (see Tables B1-B3 in the online appendix). The results are also robust to only categorizing those with very strong opinions into the positive and negative categories for each dimension (see Tables B4 and B5 in the online appendix).

intentions. Table 1 shows how the five groups are distributed across parties. Three observations stand out. First, the group sizes vary strongly across the ideological spectrum. The share of *nationalists* declines as we move from the Right (33% among SVP voters) to the Left (7% among Green Party (GP) voters). *Internationalists* are the mirror image with a meagre 1% among SVP voters and 27% among voters of the Social Democratic Party (SP) and 25% among GP voters. This finding underscores the strong party polarization on this issue in Switzerland. Second, there is considerable variation among the *potentially cross-pressured* voters who constitute a sizeable group among the Center-Right (23% among voters of the Christian Democratic People's Party (CVP) and 28% among voters of the Liberals (FDP)) but are much rarer among the Left (10% among SP and 9% among GP voters). The SVP is located between the two extremes, with 19% of its voters potentially cross-pressured. Finally, the group of *neutrals* is large throughout. It comprises a majority of voters for all parties except for the SVP and FDP.³

Overall, our analyses suggest that voters on the Right are more likely to be potentially cross-pressured with regard to the control-cooperation trade-off than voters on the Left. Moreover, the trade-off is less salient among the Left, where there are more neutral voters.

The protection-cooperation trade-off

For a long time, Swiss-EU relations were characterized by the tension between immigration control and international cooperation. In recent years, however, a new tension has emerged. The Institutional Framework Agreement reflects EU demands that Switzerland should relinquish some of its special protections for workers in the labor market – the so-called flanking measures – that were introduced when the bilateral agreements (I) were first negotiated. These demands have been met with strong opposition by Swiss trade unions. They have also opened up a new variant of the sovereignty-cooperation trade-off on the Left: the trade-off between labor market protection and deeper cooperation with the EU.

How widespread is confrontation with this new protection-cooperation trade-off among Swiss citizens? To examine this question, we once more categorize respondents in the 2019 Selects survey based on their attitudes on both policy dimensions. We use the same question on the effects of the bilateral treaties on the Swiss labor market to measure respondents' attitudes towards international cooperation. For their attitudes about social and labor market protection, we compute the average of respondents' answers to a question on state intervention vs. market competition and a question on the importance of social policy (see Table A1 in the appendix). Responses were recorded on two scales ranging from "strongly in favor of more state intervention" to "strongly in favor of more market competition" and from "extremely important" to "rather unimportant", respectively.⁴ We use the averages of these responses to arrive at three categories of respondents who view social protection positively, negatively, or in neutral terms. Opinions along the social protection and the international cooperation dimensions are then used to construct our five groups of respondents.⁵

Figure 2 displays considerable variation in confrontation with the protection-cooperation trade-off. Once more, the *neutrals* are the largest group (64% of all respondents). With 17%, the group of *potentially cross-pressured* has exactly the same size as in the control-cooperation

³Among the *neutrals*, those *leaning nationalist* are the largest subgroup with 24% of all respondents (see Table A2 in the appendix).

⁴We rescaled the two social protection indicators to give them equal weight.

⁵Tables B6 and B7 in the online appendix show that our results are robust to using an alternative operationalization of the social protection dimension which relies on respondents' preferences for social spending.

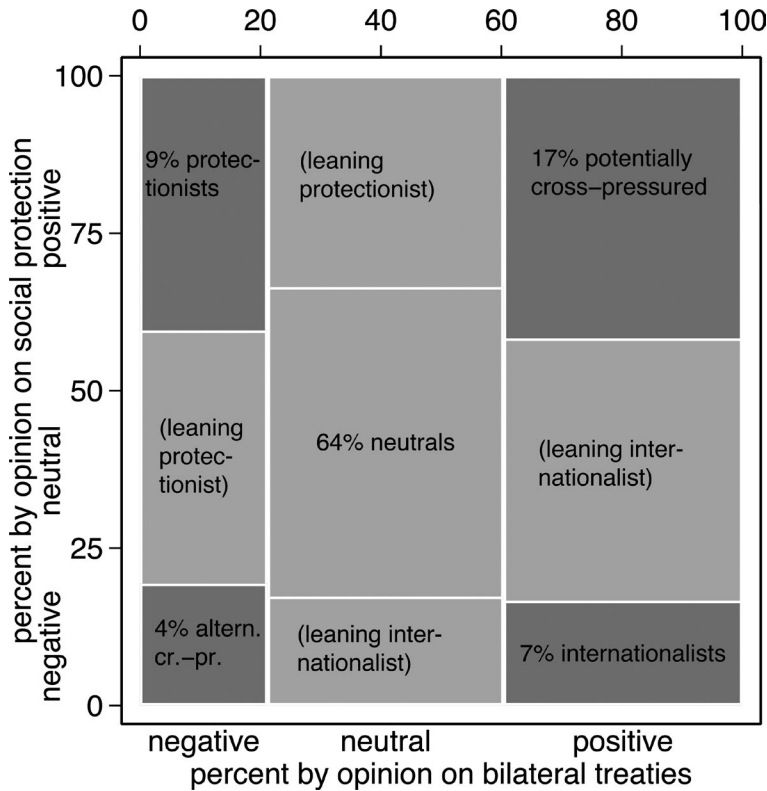


FIGURE 2 Relative shares of attitudinal groups – Protection-cooperation trade-off

TABLE 2 Protection-cooperation trade-off by party (in percent)

Party	Potentially Cross-Pressured	Protectionists	Internationalists	Alternatively Cross-Pressured	Neutrals	N
SVP	5.0	10.4	6.0	11.0	67.6	1293
FDP	9.1	4.6	16.7	4.4	65.3	1301
CVP	13.5	8.3	7.3	3.3	67.6	577
GLP	17.5	3.9	8.9	2.5	67.2	761
SP	34.0	10.0	1.6	0.7	53.8	1348
GP	28.8	9.7	1.7	1.4	58.5	942
Other/None	9.3	11.2	4.3	3.8	71.4	1330

trade-off.⁶ In contrast, only few respondents have clear preference profiles with regard to this trade-off: 9% have a clear *protectionist* profile because they support social protection and evaluate the bilateral treaties negatively, whereas 7% fall into the *internationalist* category because they oppose social protection but view the bilateral treaties positively.

Diametrically opposed to what we saw for the control-cooperation trade-off, Table 2 shows that *potentially cross-pressured* voters concentrate on the Left (34% among SP and 29% among GP voters vs. 5% among SVP and 9% among FDP voters). *Internationalists* are most likely to

⁶The *alternatively cross-pressured* comprise 4% of the respondents.

be found among FDP voters (17%) and to a lesser extent among voters of the Green Liberal Party (GLP) and CVP voters (9% and 7% respectively). *Protectionists* are most numerous among voters at the extremes of the political spectrum (10% among SVP, SP, and GP voters).

In the case of this new political tension, the *neutrals* are an even more sizeable group than for the control-cooperation tension. When splitting them into subgroups (see Table A3 in the appendix), *true neutrals* (i.e., citizens who do not have a clear opinion on *neither* the protection *nor* the cooperation dimension), *leaning protectionists*, and *leaning internationalists* make up for equally large subgroups (19%, 22% and 23% of all respondents, respectively).

Overall, our analysis suggests that most respondents do not exhibit a clear stance on this new trade-off in Swiss-EU relations, which significantly increases the political uncertainty about how this trade-off will play out politically.

HOW DO POTENTIALLY CROSS-PRESSURED AND NEUTRAL VOTERS DECIDE?

Our analyses show large groups of potentially cross-pressured voters on the Right for the control-cooperation trade-off and on the Left for the protection-cooperation trade-off. These two groups seem more additive than redundant – hence, jointly they may erode support for the bilateral treaties on both ends of the political spectrum. In this section, we shed light on the question how these voters decide when put in an actual decision situation, i.e., when pressured to take a stand in favor of either maintaining the bilateral treaties or retaining control over immigration or social policy respectively.

We formulated a choice question for each of the two trade-offs. For the control-cooperation trade-off, the choice question reads: “*If you had to make a choice, would you rather restrict immigration or maintain the bilateral agreements with the EU?*”. Answers were: “restrict immigration”, “rather restrict immigration”, “rather maintain bilateral agreements”, “maintain bilateral agreements”. To elicit decisions on the protection-cooperation trade-off, respondents were asked: “*If you had to make a choice, would you rather accept the Institutional Framework Agreement or maintain the flanking measures for wage protection?*”. Answers were: “accept InstA”, “rather accept InstA”, “rather maintain flanking measures”, “maintain flanking measures”. In both cases, non-responses remained at a very low level (2% and 5% respectively), which gives us confidence that respondents consider these questions as being valid. For the sake of simplicity, we dichotomize both variables with a value of one indicating a preference for international cooperation over immigration control or social protection, respectively.

Table 3 shows that overall, potentially cross-pressured citizens are quite divided when asked about these choices, in particular with regard to the choice between the flanking measures and the InstA. In the case of the trade-off between immigration control and maintaining the bilateral treaties, 38% prefer to restrict immigration, whereas 62% want to maintain the bilateral treaties. In the case of the protection-cooperation choice, however, 48% prefer to accept the InstA, whereas 52% want to keep the flanking measures.⁷

Interestingly, party patterns look quite different in the two trade-offs (see Table 3). For the control-cooperation trade-off, there are clear party effects: Even when they are potentially cross-pressured or have neutral positions, SVP voters overwhelmingly opt for immigration control (69% of the cross-pressured, 79% of the neutrals). In contrast, potentially cross-pressured and neutral voters of all other major Swiss parties clearly opt for maintaining the bilateral treaties (67–75% of the cross-pressured and 69–85% of the neutral voters). Since the SVP is the only large party favoring immigration control over maintaining the

⁷In the whole sample, 37% prefer to restrict immigration, whereas 63% want to maintain the bilateral treaties; 36% prefer to accept the InstA, whereas 64% prioritize the flanking measures.

TABLE 3 Preferences of potentially cross-pressured and neutral voters when facing the trade-offs (in percent)

	Control-Cooperation Trade-Off Preference to Maintain Bilateral Treaties Over Restricting Immigration		Protection-Cooperation Trade-Off Preference to Accept Institutional Framework Agreement Over Maintaining “Flanking Measures”	
	Potentially Cross-Pressured	Neutrals	Potentially Cross-Pressured	Neutrals
Overall	61.5	65.5	48.2	34.1
By Party:				
SVP	31.2	21.2	20.6	17.3
FDP	70.4	70.0	50.9	43.8
CVP	67.4	68.9	54.7	37.9
GLP	73.4	83.5	57.8	49.3
SP	75.4	84.5	49.6	39.1
GP	67.1	83.0	51.3	37.0
Other/None	59.2	56.7	33.6	25.3

bilateral treaties, these findings reaffirm the predominant importance of party cues on this matter (Emmenegger et al., 2018).

With regard to the protection-cooperation trade-off, it is *also* the SVP voters who most clearly reject the InstA (around 80%) – despite their party's decidedly (neo-)liberal stance on labor market protection. Hence, it seems that the rejection of international cooperation is so strong among SVP voters that their preference tilts towards national sovereignty irrespective of the domestic policy concerned. Beyond the SVP, however – and this is the second key finding here – choices in favor of national control of social protection are much more prevalent than with regard to immigration control, not only among the Left but also among the Center-Right. Only around 50–55% of center-right and left-wing potentially cross-pressured voters and 35–50% of neutrals in these party electorates would opt for international cooperation over social protection.

This strong partisan divide between the SVP and all other parties persists in multivariate regression models (cf. Table A4 in the appendix).⁸ These analyses confirm that for both trade-offs, SVP voters most clearly decide against international cooperation. However, as Table 3 shows, unlike the control-cooperation trade-off, voters of the other parties do *not* clearly favor cooperation in case of the protection-cooperation trade-off. Hence, in this second trade-off, SVP voters stand out because of the *vigor* with which they prefer the flanking measures to the InstA.

In sum, when pressured to decide, a clear majority of potentially cross-pressured and neutral voters opts for the bilateral treaties over immigration control, whereas a slight majority prefers to maintain the flanking measures over accepting the InstA. Partisanship is a strong predictor of these choices.

HAVE RESPONSES TO THE CONTROL-COOPERATION TRADE-OFF CHANGED OVER TIME?

The tension between immigration control and international cooperation is not new to Swiss EU politics. It first came to a head when Swiss voters accepted the popular initiative “Against

⁸Moreover, there is also a strong partisan logic when investigating the determinants of being potentially cross-pressured for both trade-offs in multivariate models (see Tables B8 and B9 in the online appendix).

TABLE 4 Control-cooperation trade-off by party (in percent), 2015 and 2019

	Potentially Cross-Pressured		Nationalists		Internationalists		Alternatively Cross-Pressured		Neutrals	
	2015	2019	2015	2019	2015	2019	2015	2019	2015	2019
Overall	21.9	16.7	25.8	15.7	17.4	13.6	4.5	2.4	30.5	51.6
By Party:										
SVP	24.0	19.2	47.9	32.6	1.9	1.0	2.3	1.2	23.9	46.0
FDP	32.3	27.6	19.9	14.1	17.7	9.8	2.5	1.0	27.7	47.6
CVP	28.9	22.9	19.4	15.4	16.2	8.5	4.1	1.7	31.5	51.5
GLP	19.3	18.2	17.1	8.9	29.7	18.8	4.6	1.7	29.4	52.4
SP	14.6	10.0	11.2	7.4	33.8	26.7	7.3	4.1	33.1	51.9
GP	13.7	9.3	13.3	7.0	32.7	25.3	7.4	4.5	33.0	53.9
Other/None	17.8	12.3	30.0	19.2	11.4	7.2	5.0	2.5	35.8	58.9

Mass Immigration” in 2014, which required immigration restrictions. Because such restrictions are not allowed in the bilateral treaty on the Free Movement of Persons, this caused considerable conflict with the EU.

Since then, much has happened in Swiss-EU relations and Swiss EU politics more generally. The Swiss attempt to renegotiate the Free Movement of Persons Treaty with the EU failed (Armingeon & Lutz, 2020). Rather than accommodating Swiss demands, the EU tightened the screws by temporarily excluding Switzerland from its Horizon 2020 research program (Walter, 2020). At the same time, the UK voted to leave the EU, which initially encouraged Eurosceptics in various European countries to step up their anti-EU rhetoric (Chopin & Lequesne, 2021), but the difficulties the UK experienced during its withdrawal negotiations with the EU overall had a deterring effect (Walter, 2021b). Given the clear signals the EU sent out between 2014 and 2019 about its unwillingness to compromise on the issue of immigration control, one would expect that the trade-off between immigration control and international cooperation has begun to bite more, because it has become clearer that it cannot be negotiated away.

To explore these temporal dynamics, we compare data collected in the Selects surveys in the context of the 2015 and 2019 parliamentary elections. Using identical group operationalizations, this comparison shows that the share of *potentially cross-pressured* voters has decreased from 22% to 17%, a decline that can be observed across all parties (see Table 4). At the same time, while the general attitudinal patterns remained similar (with potentially cross-pressured and nationalist voters concentrating on the Right), voter attitudes have become less polarized: The shares of *nationalists* and *internationalists* have decreased across all parties. Whereas in 2015, almost every second SVP voter (48%) was in the nationalist group, in 2019 only 33% belonged to this group.

However, the most striking finding when comparing the 2015 and 2019 data is the massive increase in the share of *neutrals* from 31% to 52%. Despite new and more information becoming available over this period, more Swiss voters seem to be uncertain about policy choices along the control-cooperation trade-off, perhaps reflecting that respondents’ attitudes have become more nuanced. Looking at the subgroups of *neutrals* (see Table A2 in the appendix), we see an increase among all types of neutral respondents, but a particularly strong increase in those *leaning nationalist* and those *leaning internationalist* on the basis of their immigration attitudes. This suggests that voters have moved into the neutral group because they have become less certain about the benefits of the bilateral treaties. The share of *leaning nationalist* respondents with negative attitudes about immigration but neutral attitudes about the bilateral treaties has almost doubled among SVP voters, from 20% in 2015 to 39% in 2019, but this share also increased across all other parties. Among leftist voters (SP and GP), the drop in the

share of *internationalists* likewise coincides with an increase in the share of *leaning internationalist* respondents who exhibit a neutral stance on the bilateral treaties. It is quite likely that the emergence of a second trade-off focusing on the possible negative implications of international cooperation for social protection has led to a more critical assessment of the labor market consequences of the bilateral treaties.

In sum, the events between 2015 and 2019, which highlighted that the control-cooperation trade-off is real, have gone along with changes in Swiss preference patterns in three ways. First, the share of potentially cross-pressured voters has decreased. Second, party polarization has weakened: there were considerable drops in the shares of nationalists and internationalists across all major Swiss parties. Third, the strong increase in the share of neutral voters indicates greater uncertainty about the desirability of immigration control vs. international cooperation, and especially the merits of the bilateral treaties. Despite four years of constant debate, Swiss voters continue to be torn on these issues.

CONCLUSION

This research note explored attitudinal patterns regarding the economic integration of Switzerland with the EU and the costs this integration implies. On the basis of Selects data, we compared attitudes regarding the two trade-offs that are currently debated on this topic. Our analysis shows that there are sizeable groups of potentially cross-pressured voters on both trade-offs. About 17% of voters evaluate market integration of Switzerland positively, but at the same time also evaluate immigration control or social protection positively. Moreover, the two groups of potentially cross-pressured voters cumulate rather than overlap because they are located at opposite ends of the party-political spectrum (e.g., Van Elsland et al., 2016). In addition, there are large shares of undecided neutral voters: about half of the respondents in the control-cooperation tension and even two thirds in the protection-cooperation tension. Despite the information context, which has become clearer in the meantime, there seems to be a high level of uncertainty among Swiss voters, making for more acute trade-offs and situations of decisional uncertainty (cf. Van Ingelgom, 2014). Overall, our results suggest that while anti-integration attitudes have become deeply rooted in Swiss politics, pro-integration voices have lost ground in the face of growing uncertainty and an increasing saliency of acute decisional trade-offs also among the Left.

For both tensions, we examined the policy choices potentially cross-pressured voters would make in specific trade-off situations. This analysis reinforces the finding that there is only a fine line for Swiss EU politics. While in the overall electorate, a clear majority indicates that they would choose integration over immigration control, voters tend to prefer social protection over integration. Not only among left-wing voters, but even among the electorate of the FDP and the center parties, 40–50% of the potentially cross-pressured respondents would choose the flanking measures over the Institutional Framework Agreement. SVP voters in particular have a clear tendency to decide against integration, even if their party is not in favor of strong flanking measures to protect wages in Switzerland. This pattern of large shares of voters with a preference for national protection over international cooperation on both the Left and the Right shows the potential for an “unholy alliance” of otherwise diametrically opposed political actors in Swiss EU politics. Together with the high share of undecided voters, our findings indicate how large the potential opposition to further economic integration into the EU might be.

Beyond the Swiss case, our findings reveal an important difference between right-wing and left-wing Euroscepticism. We find that left-wing Euroscepticism is more issue-specific whereas right-wing Euroscepticism is of a more general nature.⁹ In the case of the protection-cooperation

⁹Issue-specific Euroscepticism refers to opposition to specific issues related to European integration but support for other such issues and general Euroscepticism to a general opposition to all issues related to European integration.

trade-off, the potentially cross-pressured SVP voters most clearly reject the Institutional Framework Agreement despite their party's decidedly (neo-)liberal stance on social protection. Hence, the rejection of international cooperation is so strong among SVP voters that their preference tilts towards national sovereignty irrespective of the domestic policy concerned. In contrast, left-wing voters are also concerned about the protection-cooperation trade-off, but these concerns do not affect their evaluation of the control-cooperation trade-off. This finding suggests that targeted measures could help left-wing voters overcome their issue-specific Euroscepticism. In contrast, it is unlikely that any concessions induce right-wing Eurosceptics to endorse international cooperation.

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OPEN RESEARCH BADGES



This article has earned an Open Data and Open Materials badges for making publicly available the digitally-shareable data necessary to reproduce the reported results. The replication syntax is available at <https://doi.org/10.7910/DVN/OAYR5E>.

DATA AVAILABILITY STATEMENT

The data that support the findings of this study are openly available in FORSbase at <https://doi.org/10.23662/FORS-DS-1184-1> and <https://doi.org/10.23662/FORS-DS-828-3>.

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APPENDIX

TABLE A1 Question wordings

Policy Dimension	Used for	Variable	Question Wording	Answer Categories
International Cooperation	control-cooperation trade-off and protection-cooperation trade-off	W1_f15653	In your opinion, what effects do the bilateral treaties have on the labor market situation in Switzerland?	1 = very positive effects 2 = positive effects 3 = neither nor 4 = negative effects 5 = very negative effects
Immigration Control	control-cooperation trade-off	W1_f15340b	What is your opinion on the following political demands? Limitation of immigration	1 = strongly in favor 2 = rather in favor 3 = neither in favor nor opposed 4 = rather opposed 5 = strongly opposed
Social Protection	protection-cooperation trade-off	W1_f15435	Do you favor a Switzerland with more state intervention into the economy or do you prefer a Switzerland with more market competition?	1 = strongly in favor of more state intervention 2 = rather in favor of more state intervention 3 = neither nor 4 = rather in favor of more market competition 5 = strongly in favor of more market competition
		W1_f15310c	How important are the following policy fields to you? Social policy	1 = extremely important 2 = very important 3 = rather important 4 = rather unimportant

TABLE A2 Control-cooperation trade-off: Neutrals split up in subgroups by party (in percent of all respondents), 2015 and 2019

Neutrals												
	Leaning Nationalists				Leaning Internationalists				True Neutrals			
	immigration control positive / bilaterals neutral	immigration control neutral / bilaterals negative	immigration control positive / bilaterals neutral	immigration control negative / bilaterals neutral	immigration control positive / bilaterals neutral	immigration control neutral / bilaterals positive	immigration control positive / bilaterals neutral	immigration control neutral / bilaterals neutral	immigration control positive / bilaterals neutral	immigration control neutral / bilaterals neutral	immigration control positive / bilaterals neutral	Total
	2015	2019	2015	2019	2015	2019	2015	2019	2015	2019	2015	2019
Overall	11.7	21.1	3.1	3.1	4.8	9.6	7.2	9.4	3.7	8.5	30.5	51.6
By Party:												
SVP	19.7	39.4	1.0	1.1	1.1	2.2	1.1	1.1	1.0	2.2	23.9	46.0
FDP	10.4	22.4	2.4	2.8	2.9	4.4	9.4	10.8	2.6	7.2	27.7	47.6
CVP	11.2	20.1	4.0	2.9	4.0	7.9	8.5	13.4	3.8	7.2	31.5	51.5
GLP	5.7	15.0	2.8	2.2	7.0	10.9	11.4	15.2	2.5	9.2	29.4	52.4
SP	5.1	9.0	3.6	3.3	8.9	16.7	10.7	12.9	4.8	10.0	33.1	51.9
GP	5.6	9.9	5.3	4.9	7.5	18.6	11.3	9.4	3.3	11.1	33.0	53.9
Other /None	14.1	25.9	4.5	4.8	5.2	8.2	5.6	7.4	6.4	12.6	35.8	58.9

TABLE A 3 Protection-cooperation trade-off: Neutrals split up in subgroups by party (in percent of all respondents), 2019

	Neutrals					
	Leaning Protectionists		Leaning Internationalists		True Neutrals	
	social protection positive / bilaterals neutral	social protection neutral / bilaterals negative	social protection negative / bilaterals neutral	social protection positive / bilaterals positive	social protection neutral / bilaterals neutral	Total
Overall	13.2	8.5	6.8	16.5	19.3	64.2
By Party:						
SVP	8.9	13.5	11.8	10.1	23.2	67.6
FDP	8.3	8.7	9.8	22.1	16.5	65.3
CVP	10.9	7.8	5.0	24.1	19.8	67.6
GLP	10.8	6.2	6.0	25.8	18.4	67.2
SP	19.7	4.1	1.6	14.0	14.3	53.8
GP	22.2	5.2	1.5	13.6	16.0	58.5
Other/None	11.3	12.0	9.1	13.2	25.7	71.4

TABLE A4 Determinants of choice: Probability that potentially cross-pressured and neutral voters prefer maintaining the bilateral treaties over limiting immigration and the institutional framework agreement over the flanking measures (Ordered Logistic Regression Models)

	Preference for Maintaining Bilateral Treaties Over Limiting Immigration		Preference for Institutional Framework Agreement Over Flanking Measures	
	Potentially Cross-Pressured	Neutrals	Potentially Cross-Pressured	Neutrals
<i>Party (ref. category: potential SP voter)</i>				
potential SVP voter	-1.886*** (9.02)	-2.631*** (22.14)	-1.439*** (4.41)	-0.954*** (7.07)
potential FDP voter	-0.367+ (1.88)	-0.633*** (5.83)	0.205 (0.83)	0.110 (0.87)
potential CVP voter	-0.321 (1.36)	-0.587*** (4.43)	0.318 (1.12)	-0.050 (0.32)
potential GLP voter	-0.250 (1.08)	-0.086 (0.71)	0.303 (1.42)	0.261+ (1.91)
potential GP voter	-0.438+ (1.68)	0.024 (0.22)	-0.020 (0.11)	-0.096 (0.70)
other/no party	-0.640** (2.82)	-0.996*** (9.51)	-0.614** (2.58)	-0.541*** (4.10)
Male respondent	0.110 (0.95)	0.011 (0.17)	0.101 (0.75)	-0.087 (1.16)
Age (in years)	0.009+ (1.81)	-0.007* (2.53)	0.013* (2.29)	0.004 (1.30)
Education level	0.040* (2.13)	0.077*** (7.28)	0.041+ (1.85)	0.056*** (4.59)
Gross monthly household income	0.055*** (3.56)	0.016+ (1.79)	0.039* (2.17)	0.064*** (6.17)
Resident of rural area	-0.170 (1.14)	-0.137 (1.58)	0.120 (0.60)	-0.012 (0.12)
Retired respondent	-0.037 (0.22)	0.166 (1.56)	-0.131 (0.64)	0.129 (1.07)
Unemployed respondent	-0.648 (1.00)	0.410 (1.30)	-0.197 (0.24)	-0.678* (1.97)
Political interest	0.117 (1.10)	0.355*** (5.69)	0.196 (1.50)	0.069 (0.94)
Attention to political campaign	0.025 (0.23)	-0.025 (0.40)	-0.157 (1.26)	-0.040 (0.57)
Regular political participation	0.545* (2.54)	0.389*** (3.36)	0.117 (0.41)	0.169 (1.18)
Trade union involvement			-0.303+ (1.82)	-0.071 (0.65)
cut1	-0.454 (1.22)	-1.437*** (7.69)	-0.416 (0.88)	-0.792*** (3.43)

(Continues)

TABLE A4 (Continued)

	Preference for Maintaining Bilateral Treaties Over Limiting Immigration		Preference for Institutional Framework Agreement Over Flanking Measures	
	Potentially Cross-Pressured	Neutrals	Potentially Cross-Pressured	Neutrals
cut2	0.976** (2.64)	0.161 (0.88)	1.692*** (3.56)	1.776*** (7.66)
cut3	3.167*** (8.31)	2.500*** (13.30)	3.483*** (7.15)	3.857*** (15.78)
Pseudo R ²	0.072	0.114	0.033	0.044
N	1'202	3'669	843	2'807

Notes: + $p < 0.1$; * $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$; *** $p < 0.001$, standard errors in parentheses.