

# Have your cake and eat it, too?

## Exit precedents and the perceived costs of non-cooperation

Giorgio Malet and Stefanie Walter

*University of Zurich*

A key Eurosceptic argument is that a country can leave the European Union and selectively retain only those aspects from which it benefits. Therefore, limiting the cooperation benefits of a leaving member state is an important signal that the EU can send to other countries that may want to follow a similar path. Yet, do voters in such countries understand such signal? This paper studies the effects of the Brexit negotiations on Switzerland, where voters have been faced with two EU-related policy proposals, one of which would reduce the high levels of differentiation the country currently enjoys, whereas the other would further increase it. Drawing on a panel survey fielded between November 2019 and February 2021, we show that Brexit had a limited but not negligible impact on Swiss voters' expectations about the EU's resolve, as well as on vote intentions on one of the two proposals. These results confirm that voters learn from foreign political developments to update their preferences, yet they suggest that the power of exit precedents in preventing further differentiation finds an obstacle in the current polarization of opinions.

Wordcount: 8'862

Over the past 15 years, the European Union has come under increasing pressure. Geopolitical shifts, deepening integration and various crises have led to a growing politicization and contestation of EU actors and institutions (Hobolt and de Vries 2016; Hooghe and Marks 2009; Hutter et al. 2016; De Vries 2018). Calls for substantial EU reform, non-cooperative politics, opt-outs and even EU exit have become more frequent, and for the first time, a member state has left the Union. What is more, such challenges do not go unnoticed abroad. Rather, they can encourage support for similar challenges in other member states (De Vries, 2017; Glencross, 2019; Jurado et al., 2021; Malet, 2022; Walter, 2021). In response to these challenges, the EU overall has become less willing to tolerate differentiated integration, that is to support the existence of varying institutional rules across states that participate in some EU arrangements but not necessarily all (Matthijs et al. 2019). Core state powers of EU member states have become further integrated during the last decade (Genschel and Jachtenfuchs 2018). Increasingly, the EU closes and controls external boundaries, and strives for more boundary congruence.

This process of “internal debordering with external rebordering” (Schimmelfennig 2021) presents a problem for those countries, who seek to increase or maintain “differentiated integration” by selectively opting in policy areas they like to see pooled at the EU level and opting out from those that they prefer to deal with at the national level (Leuffen et al. 2013). Rather than accommodate requests for differentiation, the EU now increasingly insists that the benefits of cooperation can only be enjoyed when the costs are also borne. How serious do differentiation-seeking countries take this argument? Do they buy the argument that their country has to choose between either largely signing up to the EU’s rules or not cooperating and hence losing out the benefits that EU integration conveys?

There are good reasons for elites and voters in differentiation-seeking countries to question the EU’s resolve in this regard. Not cooperating is costly for both sides, so the EU’s threat not to accommodate differentiation requests faces credibility problems (Jurado et al., 2021; Walter, 2020, 2021; Walter et al., 2018). It is no surprise that Eurosceptics intent on more differentiation often question the EU’s resolve by pointing out that a refusal to allow differentiation and a resulting reduction of cooperation levels cause considerable harm to the EU as well. Countries seeking a more differentiated relationship with the EU thus have reasons to question the EU’s determination to not accommodate differentiation requests and to expect that ultimately, the EU will be willing to compromise.

This paper analyzes to what extent voters in differentiation-seeking countries look to other country’s differentiation attempts, and the subsequent EU response, to gauge the EU’s resolve. The more the EU accommodates other countries’ differentiation bids, the less convinced voters

should become of the EU's resolve, making them less willing to agree to any institutional proposals that decrease differentiation. Empirically, we focus on the case of Switzerland. Despite some unique characteristics, two characteristics make Switzerland a particularly useful case to study the question at hand. First, it is a case where both a reduction and an increase in differentiation were actually on the table at the same time as the EU was negotiating the differentiation bid – in this case withdrawal – of another country (the UK) from the EU. Second, Switzerland is a particularly hard case for finding any diffusion-related changes in EU-related attitudes. Swiss voters have repeatedly voted on EU-related issues in the past and the issue is highly politicized, so attitudes on Swiss-EU relations tend to be rather crystallized (Bornschier, 2015; Christin and Trechsel, 2002). Finding any effect of the UK's Brexit experience on Swiss EU attitudes thus suggests that similar cross-national dynamics are likely to occur in other contexts as well.

We use an original panel survey conducted in Switzerland in three waves between fall 2019 and spring 2021 to examine how the UK's Brexit experience shaped Swiss voters' expectations about the EU's resolve not to accommodate Switzerland's differentiation requests as well as vote intentions on two proposals about either decreasing or increasing differentiation with the EU. We find that voters' evaluations of Brexit had a small but not negligible impact on their expectations about the consequences of Swiss differentiation bids, which translated into voting intentions in related referendums. The effect of the Brexit negotiations on Swiss public opinion was strongest among respondents with moderate views of Swiss-EU relations. Overall, our findings suggest that the relevance of individual countries' differentiation bids goes far beyond the individual case, because it feeds into broader dynamics and creates possible domino effects across Europe.

## **No to differentiation – really? Gauging the EU's resolve by looking at precedents**

Perhaps the most prominent argument of Eurosceptics seeking more differentiation from the EU is that their country can enjoy the benefits of European integration without full membership or full adherence to EU rules. This argument has been put forth most famously by then British foreign minister Boris Johnson, who in 2016 described his government's Brexit policy as “having our cake and eating it.”<sup>1</sup> But similar arguments have also been advanced by political actors critical of the EU in Greece (Walter et al. 2018a), Denmark (Beach 2021), or Switzerland (Armingeon and Lutz 2019). These arguments reflect that not accommodating significant

---

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.thesun.co.uk/news/1889723/boris-johnson-joins-forces-with-liam-fox-and-declares-support-for-hard-brex-it-which-will-liberate-britain-to-champion-free-trade/>

differentiation requests (such as the Brexit referendum, the Greek bailout referendum, or the Danish opt-out referendum) carries substantial risks for the EU and its member states that the differentiation-seeking countries will no longer, or no longer so deeply, cooperate with the EU. The resulting loss of cooperation gains is costly for the EU member states, and failure to generate new cooperation gains through new agreements has opportunity costs. As Euroskeptics like to point out, this creates incentives for the EU to ultimately compromise and accommodate differentiation requests.

Despite these incentives, however, the EU has taken an increasingly inflexibly stance regarding states' differentiation requests in recent years, especially with regard to countries that are not (or no longer) members of the EU, but nonetheless want to enjoy close relations with the EU such as the UK (Schimmelfennig, 2021). This reflects that in light of growing euroskeptic pressure and increasing contestation over the EU's boundaries, the EU faces substantial risk that in accepting a tailor-made, differentiated arrangements and opt-outs to individual countries, because they may encourage similar demands elsewhere (Glencross 2019; Jensen and Slapin 2012; de Vries 2017; Walter 2021a). Such arrangements can thus be perceived as a threat to the cohesion of the EU and the understanding that the EU is a package deal in which all members make compromises to generate cooperation gains (Adler-Nissen 2014). For the EU, differentiation requests thus create a difficult trade-off (Walter, 2021, 2022): Not accommodating such requests is costly, yet accommodation carries long-term risks for the stability of the EU.

The existence of this trade-off makes it difficult, however, for voters (and elites) in differentiation-seeking countries to determine the EU's true resolve on questions of differentiation (Walter et al. 2018). This raises the question of how voters in countries faced with an EU refusal to differentiate can better gauge the EU's actual resolve. We argue that in such a context, an important way for voters to learn about the EU's resolve and thus also about the consequences of refusing to cooperate on the EU's terms, is to observe precedents of how the EU responded to other countries' differentiation bids.

There are several reasons to think that voters learn from foreign experiences and update their preferences about a possible differentiation bid in light of EU resistance. First, much research has demonstrated that voters' expectations about the consequences of more or less cooperative behavior affect their preferences for international cooperation (Grynberg et al., 2019; Hobolt, 2009; Sciarini et al., 2015; Walter et al., 2018). Preferences for a change in the terms of cooperation are rooted in a comparison between the status quo and alternative scenarios of more or less cooperation (De Vries 2018). This alternative scenario is hard to predict, however:

will it be a form of differentiated integration? Or will the EU make good on its threat not to accommodate requests for differentiation? Because the EU has an incentive to hide its true propensity to accommodate demands (Walter et al. 2018), observing its reaction to other country's bids provides important pieces of information in this regard. Second, several studies have shown that voters use information about political developments in other countries to form their own opinion about policy issues (Linos 2011; Malet 2022; Pacheco 2012). There is now considerable evidence, for example, that Brexit had an impact on individual EU attitudes (Hobolt et al. 2021; Malet and Walter 2021; de Vries 2018; Walter 2021a) and party discourse (van Kessel et al. 2020; Martini and Walter 2020) in the remaining EU-27.

For both of these reasons, we expect that observing how the EU responds to other countries' differentiation bids allows voters abroad to glean important information about its resolve, and hence the difficulties and opportunities of pursuing a similar course of action. Based on this information, voters then update their attitudes about potential differentiation bids of their own country. *The more the EU accommodates another country's differentiation bid, the more we expect voters in other differentiation-seeking countries to support similar bids for their own country, and vice versa.*

Research on motivated reasoning (Bisgaard, 2015; Kraft, Lodge, and Taber, 2015) tells us, however, that not all voters will be susceptible to this updating mechanism. When people hold strong prior beliefs, it is difficult to change their (mis-)perceptions with corrective information (Grynberg et al. 2019; Kertzer and Zeitzoff 2017; Taber and Lodge 2006). As a result, some voters show themselves unwilling to update their expectations and attitudes, even when confronted with conflicting evidence. In our context, this suggests that *the effects of observing the EU's response to another country's differentiation bid is likely to be weaker both among staunch opponents and staunch supporters of a closer relationship with the EU*, and stronger among individuals with less strongly held beliefs about their country's relation with the EU. The overall effect of the EU's response to another country's differentiation bid on support for differentiation elsewhere thus depends both on the size and direction of the signal (the EU's response) and the number of voters susceptible to (re)considering their preferences in light of this signal.

## **Switzerland between differentiated integration and rebordering**

To empirically examine this argument, we focus on Switzerland, which has for decades had a close but differentiated relationship with the EU. In 1992, Swiss voters rejected membership

in the European Economic Area. Subsequently, Switzerland and the EU created a tight web of over 120 bilateral treaties that allow for close cooperation on issues as diverse as market access, research cooperation and free movement, and even membership in the Schengen/Dublin regime (Oesch 2020). This approach has been dubbed *Europe à la carte*, or a ‘customized quasi-membership’ (Kriesi and Trechsel 2008), making Switzerland a posterchild of differentiated integration. It is also hugely popular in Switzerland (Dardanelli and Mazzoleni, 2021; Emmenegger et al., 2018).

Against this background, two differentiation-related dynamics have emerged in Switzerland in recent years, which make the country a fascinating case for studying the question at hand. The first dynamic is a push for *more* Swiss differentiation, in the sense of increasing Switzerland’s ability to deviate from the EU’s rules regarding free movement of people. This push came in the form of a popular initiative launched by Swiss Euroskeptics called “Limitation initiative” which, if approved, would have obliged the Swiss government to renegotiate the free movement treaty with the EU in order to give Switzerland more possibilities for restricting EU migration.<sup>2</sup> If such a differentiation bid should fail, the initiative required the government to unilaterally withdraw from the bilateral treaty on the free movement of people. Because of the “guillotine clause”, a legal clause that stipulates that if one of the main seven bilateral treaties is terminated, all of them cease to apply, this would fundamentally put Switzerland’s bilateral relations with the EU into question. In the years leading up to the vote and during the campaign, the EU repeatedly insisted that it was unwilling to renegotiate the treaty and that it would invoke the guillotine clause in case of a treaty-termination. The Limitation initiative thus effectively confronted Switzerland with a choice between continued adherence to EU immigration rules, and the possibility of losing access to the EU’s Single market overnight. Euroskeptics, however, argued that the EU would not “pester and bully one of its best customers,” and that the risks were ultimately low.<sup>3</sup>

The second dynamic that has marked Swiss-EU relations in recent years is a push on part of the EU for *less* differentiation in Switzerland-EU relations. This push reflects the EU’s attempts to encourage more congruence, especially among participants in the Single Market. In 2014, Switzerland and the EU began to negotiate about a new “Institutional framework agreement” (InstA). The idea was to institutionally bundle the seven main bilateral agreements (Bilaterals I) and any future agreements together into one overarching legal agreement that would provide for a dynamic adoption of Swiss law in response to changes in relevant EU law and the

---

<sup>2</sup> The initiative followed upon a similar earlier, but failed attempt (Armingeon and Lutz 2019),

<sup>3</sup> Interview with populist-right MP Roger Köppel <https://www.aargauerzeitung.ch/schweiz/svp-nationalrat-roger-koppel-zur-personenfreizugigkeit-das-ist-wie-ein-offener-kuhlschrank-ld.1257277>

introduction of a dispute resolution mechanism. Because the framework agreement put in writing the supremacy of EU law in issues related to the Single Market and gave the European Court of Justice an important role in dispute resolution processes, the agreement can be seen as a rebordering attempt by the EU, designed to reduce differentiation. Perhaps unsurprisingly, there was large resistance against this attempt in Switzerland. The institutional framework agreement was contested in Swiss politics from the start of the negotiations in 2014.

The EU announced and has since reiterated again and again that it is unwilling to update any existing agreements or conclude new ones until a framework agreement is in place. Because of the static nature of the existing bilateral treaties, this means that their value to Switzerland and their ability to maintain close integrated relations will decay over time. As a result, Switzerland saw itself confronted with a choice between signing up to a less differentiated new model of Swiss-EU relations or letting cooperation with the EU erode. Despite these threats, the Swiss government pulled out of the negotiations in spring 2021. Asked about the EU's threats in an interview, Swiss foreign minister Ignacio Cassis responded "We have to be careful not to paint the situation too black. Of course, we will have certain disadvantages. But relations with our neighboring regions are incredibly solid. [...] We cannot imagine that there will be a rupture in these relations."<sup>4</sup> Despite these doubts about EU resolve, the EU has responded by living up to its word: right after Switzerland terminated the negotiations, new certification hurdles for the medtech industry emerged as the EU refused to update a relevant directive, and Swiss researchers lost their association to the EU's large research program Horizon Europe. In the medium term, certification hurdles for the machinery industry and reduced electricity security loom large, and in the long run, Swiss-EU cooperation could fall far below current levels. In the meantime, the question of how to develop Switzerland-EU relations remain on the table – with most of the EU's demands and Switzerland's reluctance to meet them unchanged.

We leverage this unique setting to test our argument in a context in which concrete policy proposals to both differentiate further (the limitation initiative) and to reduce differentiation (the framework agreement) were high up on the political agenda. Public opinion is particularly meaningful in the case of Switzerland, as Swiss voters regularly vote on proposals concerning Swiss-EU relations. As a direct democracy, no major international treaty can be ratified without an affirmative referendum vote. This context makes it possible to elicit vote intentions on actual, concrete, upcoming direct democratic votes, rather than voters' preferences on broad policy issues. An additional aspect makes this case particularly interesting for our purposes. Both policy proposals were debated and discussed against the backdrop of the Brexit

---

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.faz.net/aktuell/politik/ausland/eu-rahmenabkommen-schweizer-aussenminister-im-gespraech-17363532.html>

negotiations between the UK and the EU. The Brexit negotiations thus provided Swiss voters with a unique opportunity to observe the EU's willingness to accommodate the UK's differentiation requests and to use this information to gauge the EU's resolve with regard to their own differentiation bids.

## **Research design: Swiss-EU relations and Brexit negotiations**

In order to study how Swiss voters used information from the EU's response to the UK's differentiation bid (Brexit), we designed and fielded an original online panel survey among the voting-age Swiss population. The survey was implemented as a web survey (CAWI) by the polling company gfs.bern and relies on its internet panel to recruit respondents using quotas for age, gender, and language region. The data is weighted based on language region, age, gender, education, and party affinity in order to ensure the representativeness of the sample.<sup>5</sup>

Our study analyzes data collected in three survey waves fielded between October 2019 and February 2021, a turbulent time both for Swiss-EU politics and Brexit politics.<sup>6</sup> Figure 1 shows that the timing of the survey waves covers both the vote on the Limitation initiative and the final phase of deliberations about the institutional framework agreement, or InstA. Because both of the Swiss effort to differentiate further, and the EU's effort to reduce differentiation occurred at the same time as the Brexit process, this survey design allows us to analyze whether changes in people's perceptions of the Brexit process are related to changes in people's expectations about the consequences of Swiss differentiation bids and in their voting intentions.

The first wave was carried out between 25 October and 11 November 2019, right after the Swiss federal legislative elections, and it included 2633 respondents. This wave fell into a time when Swiss-EU negotiations on the framework agreement were stalled and was held shortly after the breakthrough in UK-EU negotiations that was achieved when Boris Johnson signed the revised Withdrawal Agreement. The second wave was fielded among 1613 respondents from 9-28 September 2020, right before the direct democratic vote on the Limitation initiative, and during a time where negotiation positions on both the framework agreement and on the EU-UK post-withdrawal relations had hardened. The third and final wave was carried out between 8 and 28 February 2021 with 1395 respondents, shortly after the Brexit transition period ended. During this period, Swiss-EU negotiations on the framework agreement had

---

<sup>5</sup> The questionnaire was approved by the Ethics Committee of the University of Zurich (approval no. 19.10.12).

<sup>6</sup> A fourth wave was added to the original design for panel maintenance following the postponement of the vote on the Limitation initiative, and is not used for the present analyses as it does not include all the relevant questions.

intensified (to ultimately fail a few months later), and the UK was boasting that its fast and successful COVID-vaccine rollout was evidence for the benefits of Brexit.

Anecdotal evidence suggests that Brexit politics did indeed play a role for Swiss-EU politics. Swiss politicians and major newspapers commented regularly about Brexit events and discussed what they implied for Swiss-EU negotiations, and Swiss public opinion has reacted to major Brexit events (Walter, 2021).

Figure 1 – Timeline of survey waves

	Swiss-EU politics	Year	Brexit process
<b>Wave 1</b>	Jan-April 2019. Domestic consultation process on draft framework agreement (InstA); considerable criticism raised	<b>2019</b>	March 2019. After failure to ratify the Withdrawal Agreement, the UK almost crashes out of the EU with a „No Deal Brexit“. EU extends deadline in last minute
	June 2019. Swiss government concludes that changes to the InstA will be necessary; EU shows itself willing to clarify but not substantially renegotiate, ramps up pressure		July 2019. Boris Johnson new prime minister
	20 Oct 2019. Swiss federal legislative elections		17 Oct 2019. EU and UK agree on Withdrawal Agreement
<b>Wave 2</b>	Fall 2019 – fall 2020 Little progress in InstA negotiations, hardening of positions	<b>2020</b>	12 Dec 2019. Tories win Parliamentary elections
	27 Sep 2020. Vote on Limitation Initiative		31 Jan 2020 UK officially leaves EU  Feb – Dec 2020. EU and UK negotiate about post-Brexit relations. Difficult negotiations that result in a last-minute agreement in December 2020.
<b>Wave 3</b>	Nov-May 2020. Swiss-EU talks on InstA resume, several rounds of negotiations, but no substantive results	<b>2021</b>	31 Dec 2020. Transition period ends
	26 May 2021. Swiss government pulls out of the InstA negotiations		Jan-March 2021. UK rolls out COVID vaccines faster than the rest of Europe and says this is evidence that Brexit is a success

*Dependent variables: Expected consequences of differentiation and vote intentions*

Our hypotheses suggest two sets of dependent variables: The first set are voters’ expectations about the EU’s resolve not to accommodate Swiss differentiation requests, and thus about the consequences of pursuing differentiation. The Swiss case allows us to explore two types of differentiation bids: one bid for increasing differentiation (the limitation initiative), and one for maintaining existing levels of differentiation (rather than decreasing it) in the context of the negotiations on the framework agreement. A second set of dependent variables is voters’ support for these differentiation bids. We operationalize each of these concepts as follows:

*Expectations about the consequences of differentiation bids.* Our survey contained two questions that measure how Swiss voters expected the EU to respond to a Swiss decision to reduce (acceptance of limitation initiative) or maintain (refusal of framework agreement)

differentiation. These questions gauge respondents' assessments of the EU's resolve: Do they expect the EU to accommodate such differentiation bids or not? With regard to the Limitation Initiative, the survey asked: *"If Switzerland terminates the Treaty on the Free Movement of Persons, the EU has the right to terminate several bilateral agreements with Switzerland and thus severely restrict Switzerland's access to the EU market. How do you think the EU is most likely to react? If Switzerland withdraws from the Treaty on the Free Movement of Persons, the EU will (1) terminate / (2) strongly restrict / (3) somewhat restrict / (4) leave unchanged Switzerland's extensive access to the EU market."* Because the EU had repeatedly warned that it would let Swiss-EU relations erode until a framework agreement was concluded, respondents were also asked to assess the consequences of an erosion of the bilateral treaties between Switzerland and the EU. The question informed respondents that the EU had announced that it would not update existing agreements and would not conclude any new agreements with Switzerland until a framework agreement has been signed, and then asked them to rate how this would affect Switzerland. Answers were recorded on a five-point scale ranging from 1 (very negative impact) to 5 (very positive impact).

Figure 2 – Expected consequences of non-cooperation

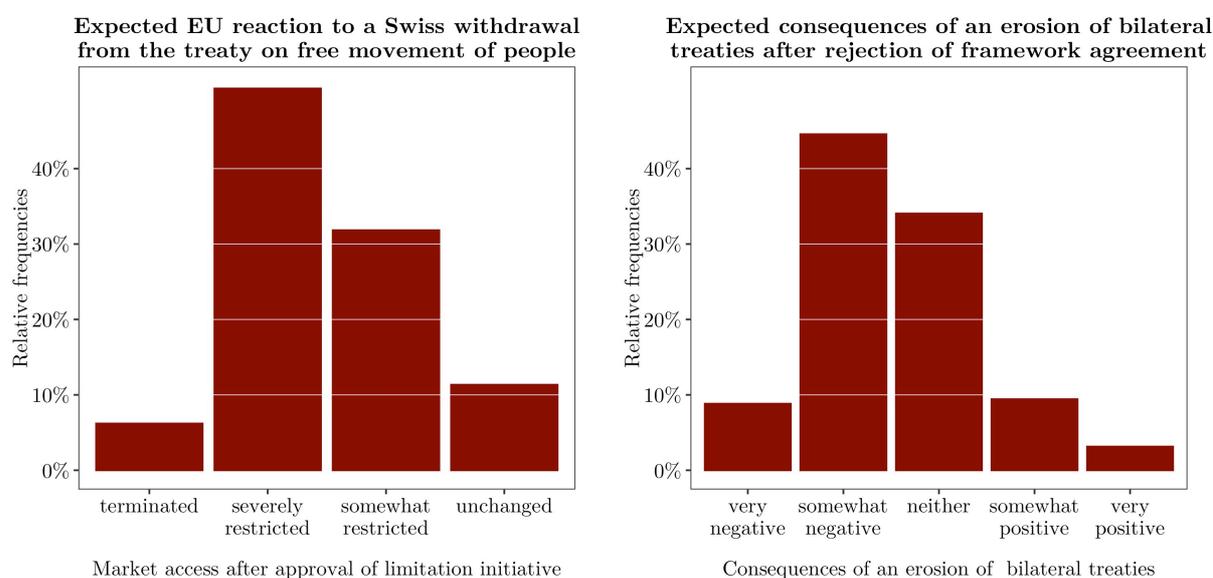


Figure 2 shows that expectations about the EU's resolve vary considerably.<sup>7</sup> While a majority of people is pessimistic about the possibility to increase differentiation at little cost, few believe that the EU will fully follow through with its threats. At the same time, one third of respondents believe that differentiation would have few consequences: In line with the argument that *"the EU is just as dependent on us as we are on it,"*<sup>8</sup> about a third of respondents believe that the EU

<sup>7</sup> Based on data from the Fall 2019 wave (wave 1).

<sup>8</sup> <https://www.begrenzungsinitiative.ch/faktencheck/>

would impose little restrictions to Switzerland's access to the Single Market if the country withdraws from the Treaty of Freedom of Movement, and 11% of respondents expect the EU not to react at all; likewise, a third of respondent believes that an erosion of the bilateral relation will have neither positive nor negative consequences for Switzerland overall (13% even believe that it will have a positive impact).

For ease of interpretation in the analyses below, answers to the expectation questions are dichotomized and rescaled. For the limitation initiative, 1 indicates unchanged or only slightly reduced market access and 0 a severe restriction or termination, whereas for the framework agreement 1 indicates (very) positive or neutral consequences and 0 (very) negative consequences. Models with full scaled dependent variables are presented in the appendix.

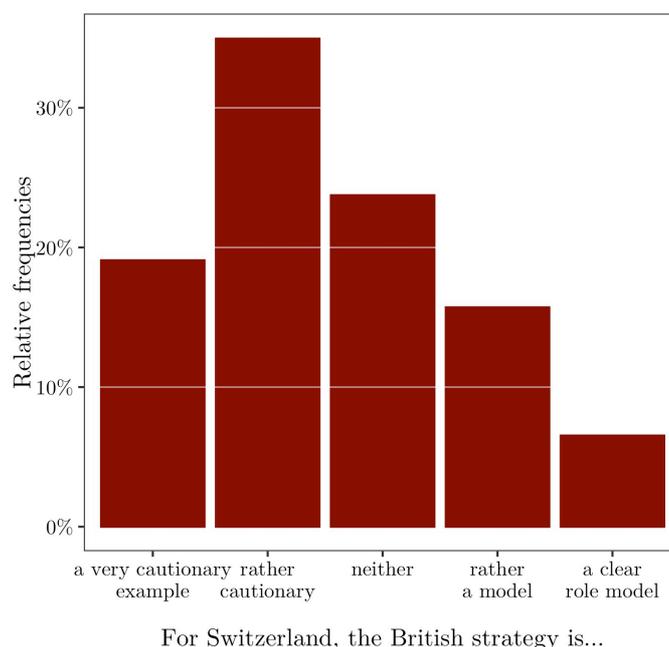
*Support for differentiation bids.* To examine the hypothesis that more negative assessments of the UK's Brexit experience are associated with more support for the limitation initiative and less support for the framework agreement, we focus on Swiss vote intentions in two upcoming direct democratic votes. To measure vote intentions on the Limitation initiative, held on 21 September 2020, respondents were asked "*The popular initiative "For a Moderate Immigration (Limitation Initiative)" calls for the Agreement on the Free Movement of Persons with the EU to be suspended or terminated. If the popular vote on the Limitation Initiative were held today, how would you vote?"*. Although a referendum on the Framework Agreement was not held during the period covered by our survey, it was always clear that the final agreement would have to be put to a popular vote. We therefore ask: "*Switzerland is currently discussing the conclusion of an institutional framework agreement with the EU. Thanks to this agreement, Switzerland would continue to benefit from a large degree of access to the European internal market, but in return would be obliged to adapt to EU law to a greater extent than at present. How would you vote if the referendum on the framework agreement were held today?"*. Answer categories ranged from 1 (definitely against) to 4 (definitely in favor). These answers were dichotomized for ease of interpretation, and rescaled so that 1 indicates support for increasing/maintaining differentiation and 0 opposition to such bids. Models with full scaled dependent variables are presented in the appendix. Vote intentions were measured in wave 1 and 2, and for the Framework Agreement additionally in wave 3.

Actual policy support for differentiation is split in our sample: In October 2019 (wave 1), 39% of respondents planned to certainly or probably vote for the limitation initiative (with 58% against). The Limitation initiative was ultimately rejected at the polls in September 2020 with 61.7% votes against the initiative. Likewise, 42% planned to reject the framework agreement, whereas 53% of respondents planned to vote for it.

*Independent variable: Assessment of another country's differentiation attempts*

Our argument centers on how non-cooperative challenges to the EU elsewhere and the EU's response to these challenges is related to voters' assessments of their own countries' bids to maintain or increase differentiation. To examine this argument empirically, our analysis focuses on the UK's Brexit experience and the EU's response to this differentiation bid. To track respondents' perceptions of Brexit over the period covered by our panel, we asked respondents whether "for Switzerland, the UK's negotiation strategy is... [a clear role model/rather a role model/neither/rather a cautionary example/a very cautionary example]." We recoded the variable so that higher values correspond to a more positive evaluations of Brexit. Figure 3 shows that our respondent tended to see the UK's strategy rather as a cautionary example (around 55%) than as role model for Switzerland (around 22%). This suggests that Swiss respondents in general were aware that the EU proved rather resolved not to accommodate the UK's Brexit-related differentiation bids, depressing their appetite to emulate the British approach. Especially for Euroskeptics, however, Brexit had considerable appeal.

Figure 3 – Brexit evaluations

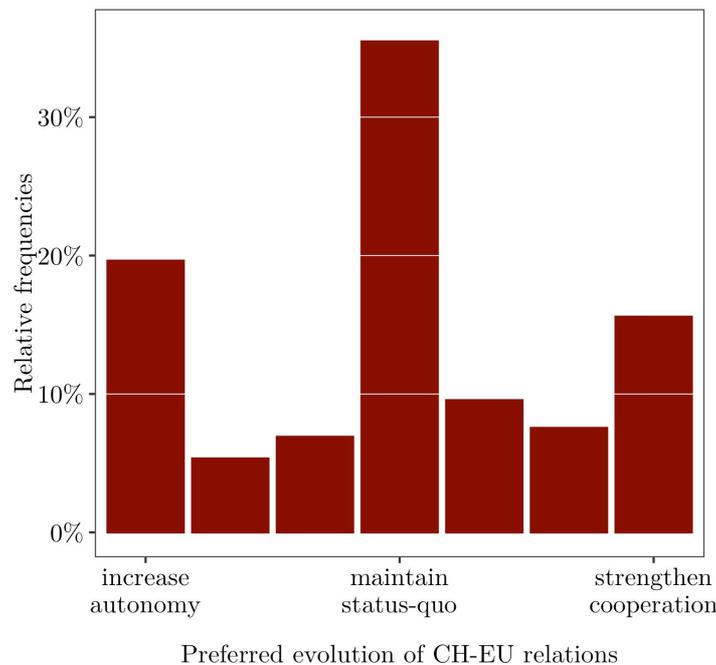


*Moderating variable: Attitudes towards Swiss-EU cooperation*

To test our hypothesis about the moderating role of motivated reasoning, we additionally include a variable on the strength of respondents' prior beliefs about Swiss-EU relations. This variable records respondents' preferred evolution of Swiss-EU relations by asking them to

place themselves on a scale that goes from 1 (increase autonomy from the EU) to 7 (increase cooperation with the EU), where 4 indicates support for maintaining the status-quo. Figure 4 shows that more than a third of respondents exhibit a strong preference for the status-quo. However, the two peaks at the extreme ends of the distribution also indicate a strong polarization of attitudes, suggesting that the high politicization of the European integration issue in the Swiss political debate over the last thirty years has left a mark on voters' attitudes (Bornschier, 2015; Kriesi, 2007). We analyze the heterogeneous effect of previous attitudes towards Swiss-EU cooperation by focusing on these attitudes measured at wave 1; as such they are not included as constitutive term in the fixed-effect model.

Figure 4 – Preferences on Swiss-EU relations



### *Models*

Our analyses leverage the panel structure of our survey, which means that the same respondents answered the same questions at several points in time. This means that we can analyze whether changes in people's assessment of the Brexit experience affect changes in expectations about the consequences of differentiation bids and changes in policy support for such bids. Focusing on changes allows us to circumvent the problem, that Brexit evaluations, expected consequences of differentiation, and vote intentions, are all strongly correlated with Euroscepticism. The drawback of this approach is that it limits our ability to detect a substantive effect and sets a bound to a general interpretation of a one-unit change in Brexit

evaluations in the analysis of the Limitation initiative because of the stability of opinions: If we consider only the first two waves, we observe that a majority of respondents did not change their assessments at all.<sup>9</sup> We observe larger shifts when we analyze three waves, as we do when we study the framework agreement and its consequences. Here a one-unit change is the median change in Brexit assessments among our respondents.

In the analyses below, we will thus present results from two-way fixed-effects models. While such models account for time-invariant unobserved confounders, we additionally control for observed time-variant confounders by including a set of control variables measured at each wave. We control for exposure to Brexit-related news, interest in Swiss-EU relations, dissatisfaction with democracy, economic dissatisfaction, government approval, vote intention for the radical-right SVP, ideology (left-right) and its squared term, support for immigration (a three-item index), populism (a five-item index).

### **How Brexit affects Swiss-EU relations: Descriptive evidence**

Brexit featured prominently on the Swiss debate about how to develop the country's relationship with the EU. After Boris Johnson finally concluded the Withdrawal Agreement in October 2019, for example, newspapers were full of op-eds discussing what the Brexit Treaty meant for Swiss-EU negotiations. Likewise, politicians from both side of the political spectrum tweeted their (rather diverse) interpretations of what the deal meant for Switzerland. These interpretations ranged from arguments that just like Johnson, the Federal Council should pressure the EU to achieve results,<sup>10</sup> to warnings that the deal had only happened for fear of fatal consequences of a No-Deal Brexit for the UK, which were echoing the risks of an erosion of the bilateral path.<sup>11</sup>

This strong relation between interpretations of the Brexit process and expected or desired developments in Swiss politics is also visible in our data. For example, the graph on the left of Figure 5 shows that respondents who see Brexit as a role model are much more likely to believe that the EU would not make true its threat to restrict Switzerland's access to the EU market if the country were to terminate the Treaty on the free movement of persons. In contrast, the more respondents see Brexit as a cautionary example, the more they believe that the EU will indeed restrict or even terminate Switzerland's access in this case. Similarly, the graph on the right

---

<sup>9</sup> In the appendix (Figure A1), we present histograms of the within-respondents ranges of the main independent variable to get a sense of the relevant shifts that occur in the data.

<sup>10</sup> <https://twitter.com/KoepffelRoger/status/1185094677432848384>

<sup>11</sup> [https://twitter.com/Elisabeth\\_S\\_S/status/1184852821339979776](https://twitter.com/Elisabeth_S_S/status/1184852821339979776)

shows that voters with a positive view of Brexit are more likely to assess positively the consequences of an erosion of the bilateral treaties, while voters whose assessment of Brexit is rather negative tend to see such development as negative too. Finally, the two graphs in Figure 6 suggest a strong correlation between Brexit evaluations and support for the Limitation initiative and the Framework agreement. People who have a very negative view of Brexit were much more likely to vote against the Limitation initiative and much more likely to vote in favor of the Framework Agreement.

Figure 5 – Brexit evaluations and expectations

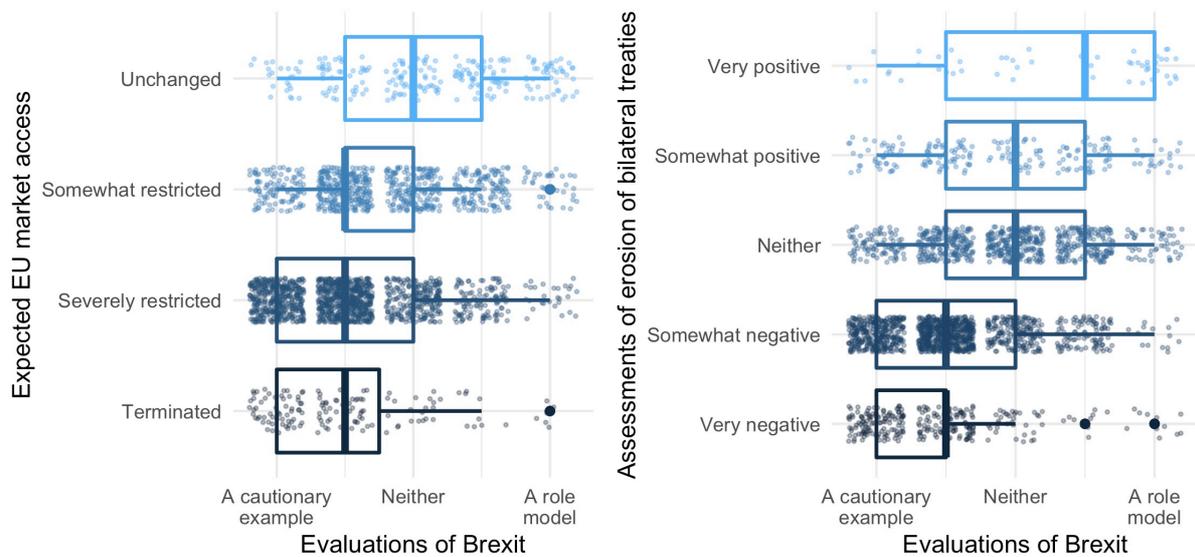
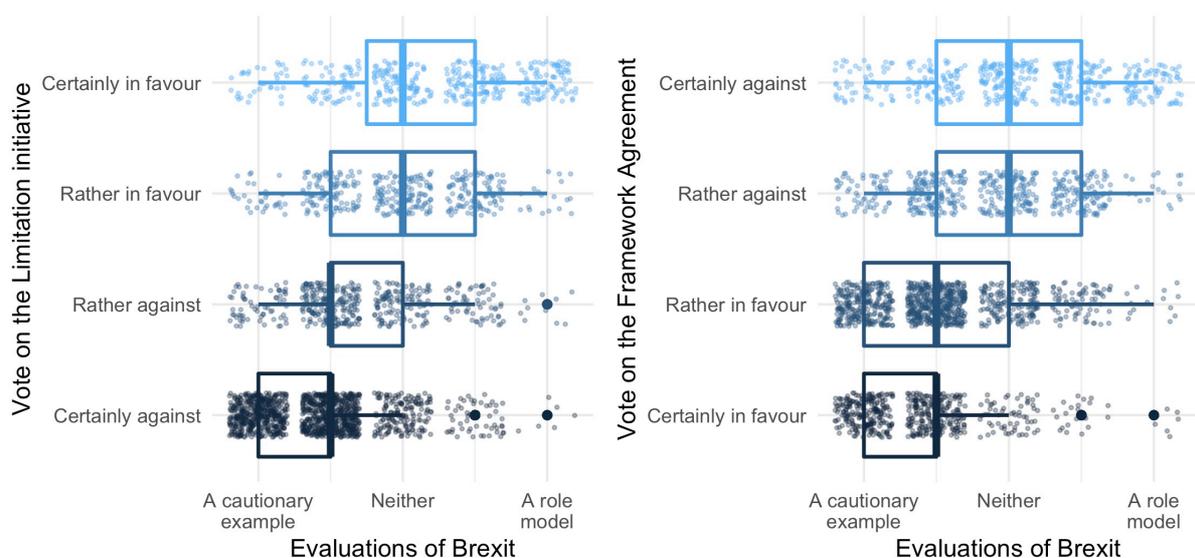


Figure 6 – Brexit evaluations and vote intentions



While Brexit thus featured prominently both in the discussions on Swiss-EU relations and is strongly correlated with expectations and vote intentions, it is less clear that it actually *changed* these expectations and vote intentions, as suggested by our argument. Indeed, tables 1 and 2 show that public opinion on Swiss-EU relations is strongly crystallized and hard to move. With regard to the limitation initiative, for example,

Table 1 – Changes in vote on limitation initiative and changes in expected EU accommodation (October/November 2019 – September 2020)

Change in expected EU accommodation	Change in vote intention for limitation initiative (waves 1–2)			Total
	Cooperative shift From Yes to No	Unchanged	Non-cooperative shift From No to Yes	
Less accommodative	36.1 % (35)	20.2 % (268)	9.1 % (5)	20.8 % (308)
Unchanged	53.6 % (52)	64.5 % (857)	54.5 % (30)	63.4 % (939)
More accommodative	10.3 % (10)	15.3 % (204)	36.4 % (20)	15.8 % (234)
Total	100 % (97)	100 % (1329)	100 % (55)	100 % (1481)

almost 90% of the people – 1329 out of 1481 respondents in our survey – maintained their position in the ten months before the vote (see the row at the bottom of Table 1). We also find a high degree of stability of voting intentions on a hypothetical referendum on the framework agreement (Table 2). Between fall 2019 and winter 2021, 1080 out of 1285 respondents (84%) did not change their mind.

At the same time, we observe more variation in people’s expectations about the consequences of the vote. With regard to expectations about the EU’s resolve not to allow an increase in differentiation, 63.4 percent did not change their mind about the EU’s reaction, but 21% became less optimistic (i.e., expecting the EU to be less accommodative) and the expectations of 16% of respondents became rosier overtime. With regard to the consequences of not concluding a framework agreement, 20% of our respondents become more pessimistic and 24% more optimistic over time. This suggests that in the fifteen months covered by our survey, the EU was not able to fully convince Swiss voters that a failure to sign up to the framework agreement would derail Swiss-EU relations. As the Swiss president Guy Parmelin put it when the government decided to terminate the negotiations on the framework agreement, “the EU

would damage itself by torpedoing trade relations with one of its most important trading partners.”<sup>12</sup>

Tables 1 and 2 also shows a strong correlation between changes in vote intentions and changes in expectations. Of the 97 people (6.6%) who decided to change their vote towards a rejection of the Limitation Initiative (cooperative shift), more than one third expected the EU to be less accommodative in September 2020 compared to ten months before. Conversely, around one third of the people who moved from opposition to support (non-cooperative shift) expected the EU to be more accommodative in September 2020 compared to October/November 2019. We see similar dynamics for the framework agreement. At the same time, also for expectations we see that many respondents did not change their assessments, even if they adjusted their vote intentions.

Table 2 – Changes in vote on the framework agreement and changes in expected consequences of an erosion of bilateral treaties (Oct./Nov. 2019 – February 2021)

Change in vote on framework agreement (waves 1-3)				
Change in evaluations of erosion of bilateral treaties	Cooperative shift	Unchanged	Non-cooperative shift	Total
	From No to Yes		From Yes to No	
More negative	28.6 % (22)	19.7 % (213)	16.4 % (21)	19.9 % (256)
Unchanged	53.2 % (41)	56.9 % (614)	53.9 % (69)	56.3 % (724)
More positive	18.2 % (14)	23.4 % (253)	29.7 % (38)	23.7 % (305)
Total	100 % (77)	100 % (1080)	100 % (128)	100 % (1285)

Altogether, these numbers show a very high stability of both expectations and vote choice which makes it unlikely to find significant effects. However, they also suggest that among the few of changed their vote intentions a good share also updated their expectations about the EU’s resolve. We therefore next turn to a more systematic analysis of these relationships.

<sup>12</sup> Interview with Guy Parmelin, NZZ, May 29, 2021. <https://nzzas.nzz.ch/schweiz/rahmenabkommen-parmelin-verteidigt-abbruch-der-verhandlungen-ld.1627715>

## The effect of Brexit evaluations on expectations

We start by analyzing whether the EU's response to another country's differentiation bid (in our case Brexit) affected Swiss voters' perceptions of EU resolve. For this purpose, the models in Table 3 analyze how changes in Brexit evaluations are related to changes in expectations about the likely EU response to a Swiss bid to increase or maintain differentiation.

Table 3 shows that, on average, when people update their perceptions of the British strategy, they do not change their expectations about the EU's response to a unilateral termination of the Freedom of Movement Treaty (Model 1) or about the consequences of an erosion of the bilateral treaties (Model 3). Although the coefficient is positive, suggesting that respondents who view the UK's Brexit negotiation strategy as a role model for Switzerland are more likely to expect an unchanged or only slightly reduced market access in response to an implementation of the limitation initiative and (very) positive or neutral consequences of a failure to conclude a framework agreement, it is not statistically significant. Given the significant stability of attitudes, this is not a big surprise.

However, changes in evaluation of the British negotiation strategy have a heterogeneous effect on expectations depending on respondents' preexisting attitudes. Models 2 and 4 test our hypothesis that voters with less extreme preexisting attitudes are more likely to update their expectations as they may have less entrenched convictions about the EU's reaction than those with extreme attitudes. Figure 7 plots the interaction effects.

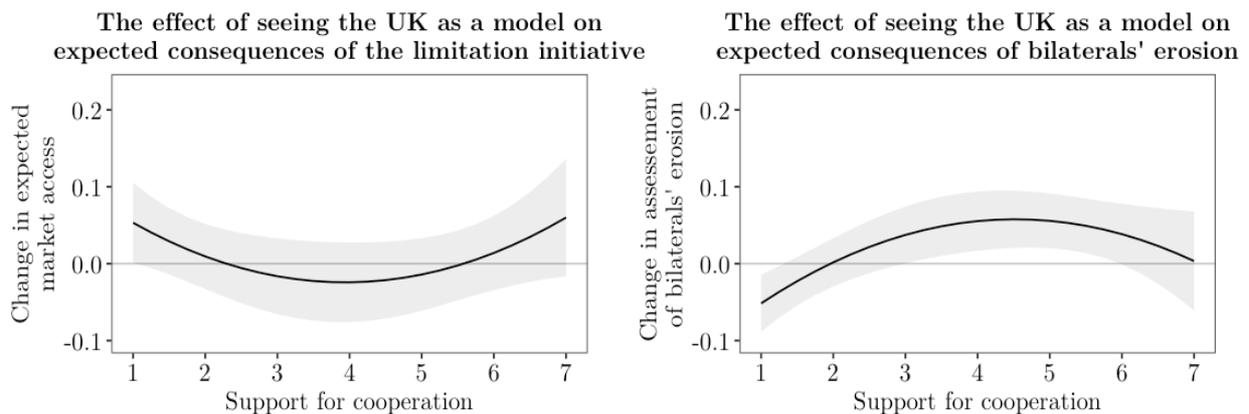
Table 3 – The impact of changes in Brexit evaluations on changes in expected consequences of differentiation

	Dependent variable:			
	Expected market access		Positive view of erosion of bilateral treaties	
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
British strategy as role model	0.013 (0.017)	0.115** (0.047)	0.013 (0.013)	-0.123*** (0.034)
British strategy : Support for cooperation		-0.071** (0.032)		0.080*** (0.024)
British strategy : Support for cooperation <sup>2</sup>		0.009** (0.004)		-0.009*** (0.003)
Num.Obs.	2661	2656	3491	3477
R2 Adj.	0.607	0.608	0.471	0.476
R2 Within	0.021	0.028	0.014	0.022

Note: \* p < 0.1, \*\* p < 0.05, \*\*\* p < 0.01. TWFE models with standard errors clustered at the individual level. Controls include: interest in Swiss-EU relations; awareness of Brexit; support for immigration;

With regard to the limitation initiative (left panel), Eurosceptic voters are the only ones who change their expectations about the market access that Switzerland would be granted by the EU in case of unilateral termination of the free movement of people. Among Eurosceptic voters, those who came to perceive the British strategy more as a model became more likely to believe that the EU would accommodate Swiss demands for further differentiation, while the expectations of those who saw Brexit as a cautionary example became more negative. These results suggest that the Brexit process had a limited but clear effect in Switzerland as it sent a signal to those voters who were more willing to follow a similar path. In contrast, with regard to the framework agreement and a possible erosion of the bilateral treaties, only people with middle positions, or only slightly favorable to increase Swiss-EU cooperation, changes their evaluations of an erosion of the bilateral treaties based on how they perceive the British Brexit strategy. The more they came to see the UK as a cautionary example, the more they were likely to see the consequences of an erosion of the current treaties as negative for Switzerland.

Figure 7 – Interaction plots



### The effect of Brexit evaluations on vote intentions

We next analyze whether voters' assessments of Brexit directly affected their vote intentions on concrete reform proposals concerning Swiss-EU relations. Here, we focus on the question whether voters' assessments of Brexit directly affect their referendum vote intentions (Table 4). Again, the results differ across issues: With regard to the Limitation initiative, changes in Brexit evaluations have no effect on changes in referendum vote intentions (model 5). There are also no statistically significant heterogeneous effects of Brexit evaluations across different levels of support for Swiss-EU cooperation (model 6).

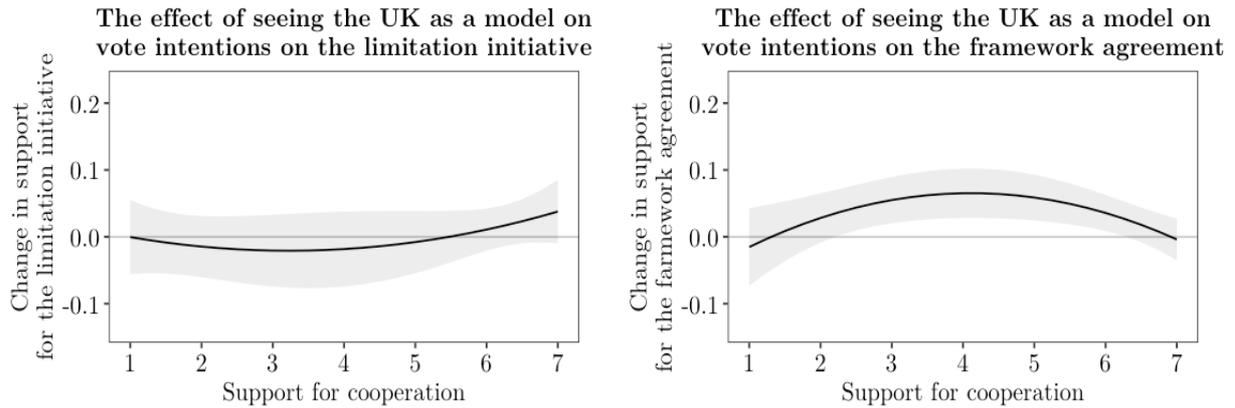
We find more evidence of a ‘Brexit effect’ when we analyze vote intentions in a hypothetical referendum on the framework agreement, which span three waves of our survey. Here, we see that on average, voters who changed their evaluation of the British negotiation strategy in a positive direction, were more likely to express growing opposition to the framework agreement (model 7). Moreover, we find significant interaction effects in line with our expectations (model 8 and Figure 8, right panel). Only voters with non-extreme attitudes on Swiss-EU cooperation changed their preferences towards the framework agreement based on their updated evaluations of Brexit. Among people in favor of the status-quo of Swiss-EU relations, a one-point change in assessments of the British strategy in a favorable direction (the average within-respondent changes over the three waves) increased people’s opposition to the framework agreement by around 7 percentage points.

Table 4 – The impact of changes in Brexit evaluations on changes in vote intentions

	Dependent variable:			
	Support for limitation initiative		Opposition to framework agreement	
	Model 5	Model 6	Model 7	Model 8
British strategy as role model	-0.007 (0.017)	0.022 (0.050)	0.028* (0.015)	-0.075 (0.050)
British strategy : Support for cooperation		-0.027 (0.034)		0.068*** (0.026)
British strategy : Support for cooperation <sup>2</sup>		0.004 (0.004)		-0.008*** (0.003)
Num.Obs.	2678	2672	3525	3512
R2 Adj.	0.759	0.769	0.722	0.723
R2 Within	0.043	0.040	0.027	0.037

Note: \* p < 0.1, \*\* p < 0.05, \*\*\* p < 0.01. TWFE models with standard errors clustered at the individual level. Controls include: interest in Swiss-EU relations; awareness of Brexit; support for immigration; populist attitudes; dissatisfaction with democracy; economic dissatisfaction; government dissatisfaction; SVP vote; ideology and its squared term. Full results are shown in the appendix (Table A3).

Figure 8 – Interaction plots



How can we interpret these conflicting findings? On the one hand, the findings for the limitation initiative underscores that that the power of the EU to signal its resolve is limited when faced with entrenched attitudes. The issue of free movement of people has been a contentious issue in Swiss politics for year, and the limitation initiative was a second try to restrict it after an initial, successful popular initiative on restricting “mass immigration” had not been fully implemented in light of the EU’s unwillingness to accommodate Switzerland (Armingeon and Lutz, 2019). In such a setting, it is hard to sway people’s minds, and the low share of “vote switchers” of only 10% attests to this difficulty. On the other hand, the findings for the framework agreement confirm our expectations that people with middle positions tend to be more malleable, giving the EU an opportunity to influence this group of people when opinions are less entrenched and when the negotiation situation is similar. After all, difficult negotiations between Switzerland and the EU were ongoing during the Brexit negotiations, whereas negotiations in the aftermath of the limitation initiative remained a hypothetical scenario. In sum, our analysis suggests that the capacity of the EU to signal its resolve and to deter further differentiation attempts finds a strong limit in the polarization of public opinion, yet it may succeed in reducing support for such attempts among the most persuadable voters, especially when they find their country in a comparable situation.

### Robustness tests

In the appendix, we replicate all the analyses with the dependent variable in their original scale (Tables A4-A5). Moreover, we show that people’s assessments of the relevance of the British Brexit strategy for Switzerland track their evaluations of the impact of Brexit for the UK (Tables A6). Additionally, we show that voters’ assessments of the Brexit impact on the UK affect Swiss expectations about the consequences of differentiation and their vote intentions on such differentiation bids in a similar way as their assessments of the British Brexit strategy (Tables A4-A5).

Finally, to probe a causal interpretation of our findings, in the appendix we present results from cross-lagged models (See Table A7 and Figure A2). While two-way fixed effects improve our confidence in the estimated coefficients by accounting for time-invariant confounders, they are still prone to issues of reverse causation. For example, voters may change their evaluations of Brexit so as to align them to changes in voting intentions to avoid cognitive dissonance. As cross-lagged models require at least three repeated measures, we focus on voting intentions on the Framework Agreement. Results show that people changed their referendum vote intentions based on their (previous) evaluations of British strategy, but did not change their evaluations of the British strategy based on their (previous) vote intentions.

## Conclusions

In response to the recent crises and challenges it faces, the EU overall has become less enthusiastic about differentiated integration, because it has the potential to threaten the EU's stability. To avoid being confronted with new differentiation bids, the EU therefore has an incentive to signal its resolve not to accommodate further differentiation demands. Ongoing negotiations provide an opportunity to signal such resolve, and thus to highlight the risks of refusing to cooperate on the EU's terms. In this study, we have asked whether and to which extent voters actually observe and act on these signals.

To answer this question, this paper has analyzed how Swiss voters responded to the Brexit negotiations, one of the biggest popular challenges to the EU to date. We hypothesized that the more the EU was perceived as accommodating the UK in the Brexit negotiations, the more Swiss voters would expect the EU to accept Swiss attempts to increase or maintain differentiation, and that such optimism would make them more likely to vote for such differentiation bids. Our results show that the EU's non-accommodative strategy was observed in Switzerland, but that it only had a limited – though not negligible effect – in changing Swiss voters' expectations and vote intentions.

We study two Swiss differentiation bids that were ongoing at the same time as the Brexit negotiations: A bid to increase differentiation (the limitation initiative), and opposition to the EU's efforts to reduce differentiation (the framework agreement). With regard to the limitation initiative, we found that the Brexit negotiations affected the expectations of the most Eurosceptic voters about the EU's willingness to accommodate Swiss demands. This would suggest that the EU's signal was clearly perceived among the people who were the most important target as they were willing to follow a similar path. However, voters did not update their vote intentions in such referendum, thus confirming the difficulty to change opinions on highly politicized issues. In the context of the framework agreement, voters' changing

evaluations of the Brexit experience had an impact on voters with middle positions on Swiss-EU cooperation. These voters, who tend to like to status quo of Swiss-EU relations, updated their expectations about the consequences of an erosion of the bilateral treaties, and also changed their vote intentions in a hypothetical vote on the framework agreement as a result of changes in their assessments of Brexit. The stronger findings for the framework agreement likely reflect that politicians and the media frequently commented on the similarity between the UK-EU Brexit negotiations and the Switzerland-EU framework agreement negotiations.

These findings have important implications for our understanding of European integration in times of internal contestation and external rebordering. First of all, our findings shed new light on how growing Euroskepticism creates difficulties for differentiation-seeking countries. As the EU becomes more contested and differentiation becomes more risky for the EU, voters in countries that have so far benefited of such selective integration are forced to reassess the bargaining space and recalibrate the costs of non-cooperation. In this process, other countries' differentiation attempts, and the subsequent negotiations, become an invaluable source of information. Our findings thus confirm a growing number of studies who show that voters learn from foreign experiences to form political preferences (De Vries, 2018; Malet, 2022; Malet and Walter, 2021; Walter, 2021). However, our findings also suggest that the ability of the EU to signal its resolve to other differentiation-seeking countries is limited by the high polarization of attitudes that nowadays marks public opinion on international cooperation in many European countries. Yet, the deterrence effect of the EU's non-accommodation stance does resonate among voters with less extreme opinion and may thus prove effective in reducing overall support for further differentiation attempts. Finally, our results suggest a strong link between political dynamics at the center and at the border of the EU (Bartolini 2005; Rokkan 1999). While scholars have so far investigated the effect of external debordering on the de-consolidation of the EU's central power (Schimmelfennig 2021; Vollaard 2018), our findings highlight that the contestation of the center also generates political dynamics at the borders.

## Bibliography

- Adler-Nissen, Rebecca. 2014. *Opting out of the European Union: Diplomacy, Sovereignty and European Integration*. Cambridge University Press.
- Armingeon, Klaus, and Philipp Lutz. 2019a. "Muddling between Responsiveness and Responsibility: The Swiss Case of a Non-Implementation of a Constitutional Rule." *Comparative European Politics*: 1–25.
- Bartolini, Stefano. 2005. Restructuring Europe: Centre Formation, System Building, and Political Structuring between the Nation State and the European Union *Restructuring Europe: Centre Formation, System Building, and Political Structuring between the Nation State and the European Union*.
- Beach, Derek. 2021. "'If You Can't Join Them...': Explaining No Votes in Danish EU Referendums." In *The Palgrave Handbook of European Referendums*, ed. Julie Smith. Cham: Springer International Publishing, 537–52. [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-55803-1\\_25](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-55803-1_25).
- Bisgaard, Martin. 2015. "Bias Will Find a Way: Economic Perceptions, Attributions of Blame, and Partisan-Motivated Reasoning during Crisis." *The Journal of Politics* 77(3): 849–60.
- Fearon, James D. 1995. "Rationalist Explanations of War." *International Organization* 49(3): 379–414.
- Fossum, John Erik, and Joachim Vigrestad. 2021. "Is the Grass Greener on the Other Side? Norwegians' Assessments of Brexit." *Politics and Governance* 9(1): 79–89.
- Genschel, Philipp, and Markus Jachtenfuchs. 2018. "From Market Integration to Core State Powers: The Eurozone Crisis, the Refugee Crisis and Integration Theory." *JCMS: Journal of Common Market Studies* 56(1): 178–96.
- Glencross, Andrew. 2019. "The Impact of the Article 50 Talks on the EU: Risk Aversion and the Prospects for Further EU Disintegration." *European View* 18(2): 186–93.
- Grynberg, Charlotte, Stefanie Walter, and Fabio Wasserfallen. 2019. "Expectations, Vote Choice, and Opinion Stability Since the 2016 Brexit Referendum." *European Union Politics*: 1–21.
- Hobolt, Sara. 2009. *Europe in Question: Referendums on European Integration*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Hobolt, Sara, and Catherine de Vries. 2016. "Public Support for European Integration." *Annual Review of Political Science* 19(1): 413–32.
- Hobolt, Sara, Sebastian Popa, Wouter van der Brug, and Hermann Schmitt. 2021. "The Brexit Deterrent? How Member State Exit Shapes Public Support for the European Union." *European Union Politics* 2.
- Hooghe, Liesbet, and Gary Marks. 2009. "A Postfunctionalist Theory of European Integration: From Permissive Consensus to Constraining Dissensus." *British Journal of Political Science* 39(1): 1–23.
- Hutter, Swen, Edgar Grande, and Hanspeter Kriesi. 2016. *Politicising Europe*. Cambridge University Press.
- Jensen, Christian B, and Jonathan B Slapin. 2012. "Institutional Hokey-Pokey: The Politics of Multispeed Integration in the European Union." *Journal of European Public Policy* 19(6): 779–95. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13501763.2011.610694>.
- Jurado, Ignacio, Sandra Léon, and Stefanie Walter. 2021. "Shaping Post-Withdrawal Relations with a Leaving State: Brexit Dilemmas and Public Opinion." *International Organization*.
- Katzenstein, Peter J. 1980. "Capitalism in One Country? Switzerland in the International Economy." *International Organization*: 507–40.
- Kertzer, Joshua D, and Thomas Zeitzoff. 2017. "A Bottom-Up Theory of Public Opinion about Foreign Policy." *American Journal of Political Science* 61(3): 543–58.
- van Kessel, Stijn et al. 2020. "Eager to Leave? Populist Radical Right Parties' Responses to the UK's Brexit Vote." *The British Journal of Politics and International Relations*: 1369148119886213.
- Kraft, Patrick W, Milton Lodge, and Charles S Taber. 2015. "Why People 'Don't Trust the Evidence' Motivated Reasoning and Scientific Beliefs." *The ANNALS of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 658(1): 121–33.
- Kriesi, Hanspeter, and Alexander H Trechsel. 2008. *The Politics of Switzerland: Continuity and Change in a Consensus Democracy*.
- Leuffen, Dirk, Berthold Rittberger, and Frank Schimmelfennig. 2013. *Differentiated Integration: Explaining Variation in the European Union*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Linos, Katerina. 2011. "Diffusion through Democracy." *American Journal of Political Science* 55(3): 678–95.
- Malet, Giorgio. 2022. *Cross-National Social Influence: How Foreign Votes Can Affect Domestic Public Opinion*. Comparative Political Studies, forthcoming.
- Malet, Giorgio, and Stefanie Walter. 2021. *Brexit Spillovers How British Domestic Politics Affected Support for European Integration in Remaining Member States*. Zurich.
- Martini, Marco, and Stefanie Walter. 2020. "Learning from Precedent: How the British Brexit Experience Counteracts Populism Outside the UK." In *Paper Presented at the 2020 APSA Annual Meeting*.

- Matthijs, Matthias, Craig Parsons, and Christina Toenshoff. 2019. "Ever Tighter Union? Brexit, Grexit, and Frustrated Differentiation in the Single Market and Eurozone." *Comparative European Politics* 17(2): 209–30.
- Oesch, Matthias. 2020. *Schweiz–Europäische Union: Grundlagen, Bilaterale Abkommen, Autonomer Nachvollzug*. buch and netz.
- Pacheco, Julianna. 2012. "The Social Contagion Model: Exploring the Role of Public Opinion on the Diffusion of Antismoking Legislation across the American States." *The Journal of Politics* 74(1): 187–202.
- Rokkan, Stein. 1999. *State Formation, Nation-Building, and Mass Politics in Europe: The Theory of Stein Rokkan: Based on His Collected Works*. Clarendon Press.
- Schimmelfennig, Frank. 2021. "Rebordering Europe: External Boundaries and Integration in the European Union." *Journal of European Public Policy* 28(3): 311–30.
- Schraff, Dominik. 2020. "Asymmetric Ratification Standards and Popular Perceptions of Legitimacy." *Journal of European Public Policy*. 1–22.
- Taber, Charles S, and Milton Lodge. 2006. "Motivated Skepticism in the Evaluation of Political Beliefs." *American Journal of Political Science* 50(3): 755–69.
- Vollaard, Hans. 2018. *European Disintegration: A Search for Explanations*.
- De Vries, Catherine. 2017. "Benchmarking Brexit: How the British Decision to Leave Shapes EU Public Opinion." *Journal of Common Market Studies* 55: 38–53.
- De Vries, Catherine. 2018. *Euroscepticism and the Future of European Integration*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Walter, Stefanie. 2020. *The Mass Politics of International Disintegration*. Zürich.
- . 2021a. "Brexit Domino? The Political Contagion Effects of Voter-Endorsed Withdrawals from International Institutions." *Comparative Political Studies*.
- . 2021b. "EU-27 Public Opinion on Brexit." *Journal of Common Market Studies* 59(3): 569–88.
- Walter, Stefanie, Elias Dinas, Ignacio Jurado, and Nikitas Konstantinidis. 2018. "Noncooperation by Popular Vote: Expectations, Foreign Intervention, and the Vote in the 2015 Greek Bailout Referendum." *International Organization* 72(4): 969–994

## Acknowledgements

This project has received funding from the European Research Council under the EU's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme (grant agreement no. 817582 - ERC Consolidator Grant DISINTEGRATION). We would like to thank Catherine De Vries, Sara Hobolt, Martijn Huysmans, Miriam Sorace, Waltraud Schelkle, Lora Anne Viola and participants at APSA 2021, EUSA 2022, the INDIVEU workshop in Amsterdam, the Swiss Political Science Conference 2022, and at the online workshops on "Causes and Modes of EU Disintegration" and on "The Crisis That Wasn't? Brexit and Membership Crisis in the European Union" for very helpful comments and suggestions. Finally, we would like to thank Théoda Woeffray and Lukas Stiefel for excellent research assistance.

## Authors information

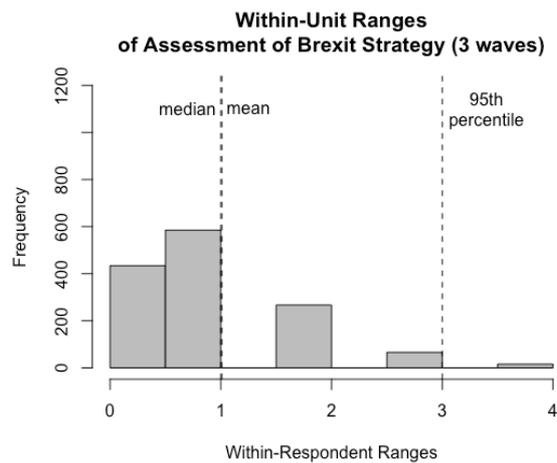
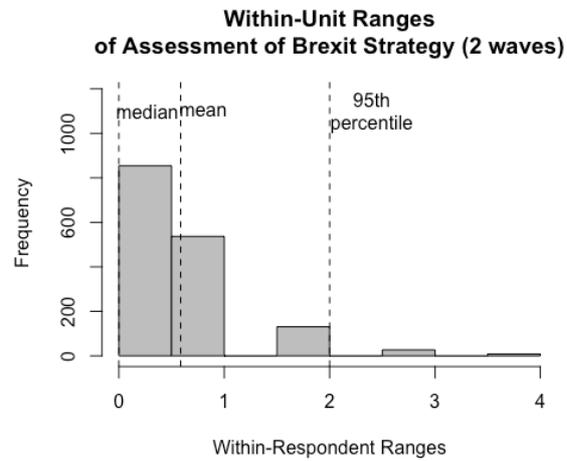
**Giorgio Malet** is a postdoctoral researcher at the University of Zurich. He obtained his PhD at the European University Institute. His research focuses on public opinion formation, party competition, and European politics.

**Stefanie Walter** is Full Professor for International Relations and Political Economy at the Department of Political Science at the University of Zurich. Her research focuses on distributional conflicts, the political economy of financial crises, and the backlash against globalization and European integration.



# Appendix

Figure A1 – Within-Unit Absolute Ranges of the Independent Variable



For a substantive interpretation of effect sizes in fixed effects models, we show the mean and median within-responder absolute change in the main independent variable across the first two waves (covered in the analysis of the limitation initiative) and across all the three waves (covered in the analysis of the framework agreement).

Table A2 – The impact of changes in Brexit evaluations on changes in expected consequences of differentiation

	Dependent variable:							
	Expected market access				Positive view of erosion of bilateral treaties			
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5	Model 6	Model 7	Model 8
British strategy as role model	0.013 (0.017)	0.115** (0.047)			0.013 (0.013)	-0.123*** (0.034)		
British strategy : Support for cooperation		-0.071** (0.032)				0.080*** (0.024)		
British strategy : Support for cooperation <sup>2</sup>		0.009** (0.004)				-0.009*** (0.003)		
Positive Brexit impact on UK			0.039* (0.021)	0.209** (0.082)			0.021 (0.022)	-0.038 (0.057)
Brexit impact : Support for cooperation				-0.084* (0.044)				0.004 (0.042)
Brexit impact : Support for cooperation <sup>2</sup>				0.008 (0.005)				0.002 (0.006)
Interest in Swiss-EU relations	-0.024 (0.025)	-0.021 (0.025)	-0.007 (0.026)	-0.009 (0.025)	-0.015 (0.024)	-0.020 (0.023)	-0.011 (0.023)	-0.012 (0.022)
Heard of Brexit	0.008 (0.015)	0.007 (0.014)	0.003 (0.015)	0.002 (0.015)	-0.007 (0.015)	-0.003 (0.015)	-0.008 (0.015)	-0.004 (0.015)
Support for immigration (index)	0.017 (0.033)	0.014 (0.032)	0.012 (0.034)	0.012 (0.033)	0.025 (0.026)	0.029 (0.026)	0.017 (0.026)	0.014 (0.026)
Populist attitude (index)	-0.024 (0.025)	-0.023 (0.025)	-0.007 (0.025)	-0.007 (0.025)	0.005 (0.025)	0.008 (0.025)	0.006 (0.024)	0.009 (0.024)
Dissatisfaction with democracy	0.002 (0.025)	0.006 (0.025)	0.012 (0.025)	0.017 (0.024)	0.034 (0.032)	0.035 (0.033)	0.043 (0.032)	0.038 (0.032)
Economic dissatisfaction	0.053* (0.030)	0.054* (0.030)	0.040 (0.031)	0.030 (0.030)	-0.008 (0.023)	-0.004 (0.023)	-0.006 (0.023)	-0.001 (0.023)
Government dissatisfaction	-0.046* (0.027)	-0.044 (0.027)	-0.050* (0.028)	-0.051* (0.028)	0.022 (0.026)	0.020 (0.025)	0.015 (0.025)	0.016 (0.025)
SVP vote	-0.067 (0.080)	-0.059 (0.078)	-0.043 (0.081)	-0.018 (0.075)	0.022 (0.080)	0.005 (0.080)	0.052 (0.080)	0.041 (0.080)
Left-Right	-0.095* (0.053)	-0.099* (0.052)	-0.076 (0.053)	-0.078 (0.052)	0.058 (0.046)	0.064 (0.047)	0.047 (0.046)	0.053 (0.047)
Left-Right <sup>2</sup>	0.007* (0.004)	0.007* (0.004)	0.006 (0.004)	0.005 (0.004)	-0.007* (0.004)	-0.008** (0.004)	-0.007* (0.004)	-0.007* (0.004)
Num.Obs.	2661	2656	2671	2663	3491	3477	3503	3489
R2 Adj.	0.607	0.608	0.606	0.607	0.471	0.476	0.477	0.481
R2 Within	0.021	0.028	0.018	0.028	0.014	0.022	0.015	0.021

Note: \* p < 0.1, \*\* p < 0.05, \*\*\* p < 0.01. TWFE models with standard errors clustered at the individual level.

Table A3 – The impact of changes in Brexit evaluations on changes in vote intentions

	Dependent variable:							
	Support for limitation initiative				Opposition to framework agreement			
	Model 9	Model 10	Model 11	Model 12	Model 13	Model 14	Model 15	Model 16
British strategy as role model	-0.007 (0.017)	0.022 (0.050)			0.028* (0.015)	-0.075 (0.050)		
British strategy : Support for cooperation		-0.027 (0.034)				0.068*** (0.026)		
British strategy : Support for cooperation <sup>2</sup>		0.004 (0.004)				-0.008*** (0.003)		
Positive Brexit impact on UK			0.006 (0.024)	0.119 (0.074)			0.014 (0.019)	-0.130* (0.075)
Brexit impact : Support for cooperation				-0.044 (0.040)				0.098*** (0.038)
Brexit impact : Support for cooperation <sup>2</sup>				0.004 (0.005)				-0.012*** (0.004)
Interest in Swiss-EU relations	0.011 (0.014)	0.012 (0.014)	0.004 (0.014)	0.004 (0.014)	-0.011 (0.016)	-0.016 (0.015)	-0.005 (0.016)	-0.013 (0.015)
Heard of Brexit	-0.006 (0.014)	0.000 (0.013)	0.002 (0.014)	0.009 (0.012)	-0.017 (0.014)	-0.014 (0.013)	-0.017 (0.014)	-0.016 (0.013)
Support for immigration (index)	-0.066** (0.027)	-0.072*** (0.027)	-0.058** (0.026)	-0.062** (0.026)	-0.038 (0.024)	-0.034 (0.023)	-0.034 (0.025)	-0.028 (0.024)
Populist attitude (index)	0.040* (0.022)	0.035* (0.021)	0.039* (0.021)	0.032 (0.020)	-0.015 (0.017)	-0.014 (0.018)	-0.007 (0.017)	-0.004 (0.016)
Dissatisfaction with democracy	0.048* (0.025)	0.029 (0.019)	0.060** (0.024)	0.047** (0.020)	0.011 (0.018)	0.014 (0.018)	0.009 (0.018)	0.007 (0.019)
Economic dissatisfaction	-0.036 (0.030)	-0.024 (0.027)	-0.041 (0.028)	-0.035 (0.026)	-0.028 (0.019)	-0.026 (0.018)	-0.027 (0.019)	-0.025 (0.019)
Government dissatisfaction	-0.006 (0.029)	0.002 (0.028)	-0.005 (0.027)	-0.001 (0.026)	0.017 (0.019)	0.014 (0.019)	0.017 (0.019)	0.016 (0.018)
SVP vote	0.068 (0.070)	0.072 (0.070)	0.063 (0.067)	0.082 (0.067)	0.127 (0.079)	0.118 (0.079)	0.142* (0.077)	0.137* (0.076)
Left-Right	-0.043 (0.057)	-0.048 (0.055)	0.012 (0.029)	0.010 (0.028)	-0.015 (0.028)	-0.011 (0.028)	-0.018 (0.027)	-0.017 (0.027)
Left-Right <sup>2</sup>	0.003 (0.004)	0.003 (0.004)	-0.000 (0.003)	-0.000 (0.003)	0.000 (0.002)	-0.000 (0.002)	0.000 (0.002)	0.000 (0.002)
Num.Obs.	2678	2672	2683	2675	3525	3512	3535	3521
R2 Adj.	0.759	0.769	0.772	0.783	0.722	0.723	0.721	0.722
R2 Within	0.043	0.040	0.045	0.049	0.027	0.037	0.023	0.034

Note: \* p < 0.1, \*\* p < 0.05, \*\*\* p < 0.01. TWFE models with standard errors clustered at the individual level.

Table A4 – Replication of Table A2 with full scaled DVs

	Dependent variable:							
	Expected market access				Positive view of erosion of bilateral treaties			
	Model 17	Model 18	Model 19	Model 20	Model 21	Model 22	Model 23	Model 24
British strategy as role model	-0.008 (0.025)	0.106 (0.077)			-0.034 (0.027)	-0.338*** (0.097)		
British strategy : Support for cooperation		-0.096** (0.046)				0.176*** (0.053)		
British strategy : Support for cooperation <sup>2</sup>		0.014** (0.006)				-0.019*** (0.007)		
Positive Brexit impact on UK			0.043 (0.033)	0.117 (0.144)			0.036 (0.038)	-0.135 (0.143)
Brexit impact : Support for cooperation				-0.005 (0.072)				0.055 (0.076)
Brexit impact : Support for cooperation <sup>2</sup>				-0.003 (0.008)				-0.002 (0.010)
Interest in Swiss-EU relations	-0.038 (0.035)	-0.033 (0.035)	-0.020 (0.037)	-0.021 (0.036)	-0.010 (0.038)	-0.021 (0.038)	-0.005 (0.038)	-0.010 (0.038)
Heard of Brexit	0.000 (0.023)	-0.002 (0.023)	-0.002 (0.023)	-0.002 (0.024)	0.018 (0.028)	0.026 (0.028)	0.019 (0.028)	0.026 (0.028)
Support for immigration (index)	-0.019 (0.050)	-0.025 (0.050)	-0.026 (0.051)	-0.023 (0.051)	0.046 (0.057)	0.054 (0.058)	0.038 (0.058)	0.038 (0.057)
Populist attitude (index)	-0.015 (0.040)	-0.013 (0.040)	-0.000 (0.041)	-0.001 (0.041)	0.053 (0.038)	0.058 (0.039)	0.049 (0.039)	0.055 (0.039)
Dissatisfaction with democracy	-0.019 (0.042)	-0.017 (0.041)	-0.001 (0.044)	0.006 (0.044)	-0.003 (0.058)	0.000 (0.059)	0.012 (0.058)	0.003 (0.059)
Economic dissatisfaction	0.063 (0.039)	0.064 (0.039)	0.047 (0.039)	0.037 (0.039)	0.012 (0.043)	0.018 (0.042)	0.019 (0.044)	0.027 (0.043)
Government dissatisfaction	-0.051 (0.041)	-0.047 (0.041)	-0.058 (0.042)	-0.059 (0.041)	0.052 (0.055)	0.048 (0.052)	0.038 (0.055)	0.040 (0.055)
SVP vote	-0.019 (0.123)	-0.012 (0.122)	0.001 (0.120)	0.021 (0.117)	0.016 (0.093)	-0.019 (0.093)	0.061 (0.095)	0.040 (0.094)
Left-Right	-0.133* (0.075)	-0.138* (0.074)	-0.098 (0.073)	-0.096 (0.074)	0.064 (0.076)	0.076 (0.076)	0.039 (0.074)	0.048 (0.075)
Left-Right <sup>2</sup>	0.009 (0.006)	0.009 (0.006)	0.007 (0.006)	0.006 (0.006)	-0.009 (0.006)	-0.011* (0.006)	-0.008 (0.006)	-0.008 (0.006)
Num.Obs.	2661	2656	2671	2663	3491	3477	3503	3489
R2 Adj.	0.651	0.649	0.649	0.647	0.479	0.486	0.476	0.480
R2 Within	0.013	0.020	0.012	0.016	0.013	0.027	0.012	0.018

Note: \* p < 0.1, \*\* p < 0.05, \*\*\* p < 0.01. TWFE models with standard errors clustered at the individual level.

Table A5 – Replication of Table A3 with full scaled DVs

Dependent variable:

	Support for limitation initiative				Opposition to framework agreement			
	Model 25	Model 26	Model 27	Model 28	Model 29	Model 30	Model 31	Model 32
British strategy as role model	0.039 (0.042)	-0.007 (0.127)			0.052*** (0.020)	-0.112* (0.063)		
British strategy : Support for cooperation		0.032 (0.083)				0.097*** (0.035)		
British strategy : Support for cooperation <sup>2</sup>		-0.004 (0.010)				-0.011** (0.004)		
Positive Brexit impact on UK			-0.003 (0.062)	0.047 (0.169)			0.073** (0.031)	-0.172 (0.108)
Brexit impact : Support for cooperation				0.029 (0.093)				0.149** (0.059)
Brexit impact : Support for cooperation <sup>2</sup>				-0.006 (0.011)				-0.017** (0.007)
Interest in Swiss-EU relations	0.055 (0.039)	0.052 (0.038)	0.040 (0.039)	0.046 (0.037)	-0.043 (0.029)	-0.049* (0.029)	-0.032 (0.029)	-0.044 (0.029)
Heard of Brexit	-0.012 (0.039)	0.011 (0.032)	0.007 (0.037)	0.030 (0.030)	-0.019 (0.020)	-0.015 (0.020)	-0.016 (0.020)	-0.013 (0.019)
Support for immigration (index)	-0.146** (0.072)	-0.159** (0.070)	-0.130* (0.070)	-0.139** (0.068)	-0.062* (0.034)	-0.055* (0.034)	-0.046 (0.034)	-0.038 (0.033)
Populist attitude (index)	0.055 (0.056)	0.037 (0.053)	0.072 (0.052)	0.053 (0.048)	0.025 (0.029)	0.026 (0.029)	0.037 (0.027)	0.042 (0.027)
Dissatisfaction with democracy	0.190*** (0.070)	0.133*** (0.047)	0.211*** (0.064)	0.168*** (0.047)	0.011 (0.033)	0.013 (0.033)	0.013 (0.032)	0.007 (0.033)
Economic dissatisfaction	-0.079 (0.075)	-0.040 (0.066)	-0.090 (0.071)	-0.059 (0.063)	-0.059* (0.031)	-0.057* (0.031)	-0.053* (0.031)	-0.047 (0.031)
Government dissatisfaction	0.013 (0.068)	0.030 (0.065)	0.027 (0.062)	0.038 (0.062)	0.052* (0.029)	0.049* (0.028)	0.050* (0.029)	0.050* (0.028)
SVP vote	0.216 (0.151)	0.222 (0.153)	0.199 (0.146)	0.221 (0.145)	0.268* (0.147)	0.250* (0.148)	0.268* (0.144)	0.255* (0.141)
Left-Right	-0.127 (0.156)	-0.136 (0.155)	0.027 (0.072)	0.027 (0.071)	-0.094 (0.061)	-0.089 (0.060)	-0.091 (0.059)	-0.087 (0.059)
Left-Right <sup>2</sup>	0.005 (0.011)	0.006 (0.011)	-0.003 (0.006)	-0.004 (0.006)	0.005 (0.005)	0.004 (0.005)	0.004 (0.005)	0.004 (0.005)
Num.Obs.	2678	2672	2683	2675	3525	3512	3535	3521
R2 Adj.	0.791	0.805	0.803	0.817	0.800	0.801	0.800	0.802
R2 Within	0.055	0.052	0.056	0.053	0.038	0.046	0.039	0.049

Note: \* p < 0.1, \*\* p < 0.05, \*\*\* p < 0.01. TWFE models with standard errors clustered at the individual level.

Table A6 – The impact of assessments of Brexit impact on UK on assessments of British Brexit strategy

DV: UK a role model (0/1)

	Model 33
Positive assessment of Brexit outcome	0.081*** (0.025)
Interest in Swiss-EU relations	0.005 (0.022)
Heard of Brexit	-0.008 (0.013)
Support for immigration (index)	0.013 (0.026)
Populist attitude (index)	0.002 (0.020)
Dissatisfaction with democracy	-0.011 (0.026)
Economic dissatisfaction	0.012 (0.025)
Government dissatisfaction	0.050** (0.024)
SVP vote	0.001 (0.078)
Left-Right	0.017 (0.043)
Left-Right^2	-0.002 (0.004)
Num.Obs.	3514
R2 Adj.	0.522
R2 Within	0.032

Note: \* p < 0.1, \*\* p < 0.05, \*\*\* p < 0.01. TWFE models with standard errors clustered at the individual level.

Table A7 – Cross-lagged models

	DV:	
	Support InstA Model 34	British strategy Model 35
Support for framework agreement <sub>t-1</sub>	0.651***	0.777***

	(0.022)	(0.055)
	0.037***	0.526***
British strategy as role model $t_{-1}$	(0.010)	(0.024)
Wave 3	-0.165***	0.208**
	(0.034)	(0.083)
Support for framework agreement $t_{-1}$ : Wave 3	-0.099***	-0.284***
	(0.032)	(0.080)
British strategy as role model $t_{-1}$ : Wave 3	0.062***	0.022
	(0.014)	(0.034)
Constant	0.109***	1.041***
	(0.024)	(0.059)
Num.Obs.	2661	2656
R2 Adj.	0.651	0.649
R2 Within	0.013	0.020

Figure A2 – Cross-lagged models

