

# National Sovereignty vs. International Cooperation: Policy Choices in Trade-Off Situations

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**Abstract:** *The trade-off between international cooperation gains and national sovereignty has become increasingly salient in recent years. This paper examines how voters assess this trade-off in Switzerland, focusing on the choice between the economic benefits of EU integration versus sovereign immigration control. Using survey data, we identify voters for whom this choice is not clear, either because they are cross-pressured (favouring Swiss-EU bilateral treaties, while opposing increased immigration) or because they do not have clear preferences. We show that these are sizeable groups within the Swiss electorate and that in particular the potentially cross-pressured mainly consist of politically mobilized, high-income voters, supportive of right-wing parties. Among the potentially cross-pressured and voters with indistinct preferences, leaning towards the SVP strongly predicts a preference for immigration control over sustaining cooperation with the EU. Beyond this, our findings suggest that political variables have stronger explanatory power than individual-level economic vulnerabilities in predicting choice.*

## 1. Introduction<sup>1</sup>

Over the past decades, international cooperation among European countries has grown significantly. This development has often led to growth and prosperity. However, an increasing number of international regulations have also limited the ability of national governments to tailor domestic policies to the specific demands of their electorates, thus effectively constraining their room to manoeuvre. The resulting tension between the benefits of international cooperation and the loss of national sovereignty has become increasingly salient within electoral politics in Europe and beyond (Hobolt and de Vries 2016; Rodrick 2011), dividing citizens and political parties on issues such as international openness, European integration and immigration (Kriesi et al. 2006; Marks and Steenbergen 2002; Wilson 2017). In a number of popular referendums that recently confronted the trade-off between international cooperation and national sovereignty, voters have rejected the constraints that international cooperation imposes on national policy-making. For example, in 2015, Greek voters rejected loan conditions attached to a proposed bailout package in an attempt to regain policy autonomy despite membership in the Eurozone. In 2016, British voters decided that the United Kingdom (UK) should leave the European Union (EU) in order to “take back control” of the policy autonomy that the

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country had lost to the EU. Finally, in 2014, the Swiss electorate voted in favour of increased immigration control, at odds with the country's bilateral treaty with the EU on the free movement of people.

Against this backdrop, it is becoming increasingly important to understand how voters behave when faced with explicit trade-off decisions between the benefits of international cooperation and those of autonomous national decision-making. This paper generates insights into this question by focusing on the voters for whom this choice is particularly difficult, either because they value *both* the benefits of cooperation *and* national sovereignty, or because they are indifferent on one or both of these issues. In countries where overall support for nationalist and internationalist positions are rather balanced, the choice of these groups of voters may eventually be decisive. To date, we know little about who these voters are, nor about what determines their priorities between international economic integration and national political sovereignty. These are precisely the questions this paper investigates.

For this purpose, we focus on the trade-off between access to the economic benefits of EU integration versus the loss of sovereign immigration control. This trade-off was front and centre in the UK's Brexit debate (Goodwin and Milazzo 2017; Hobolt 2016; Owen and Walter 2017), has been a major source of growing euroscepticism in Eastern European states (Taggart and Szczerbiak 2018) and continues to dominate the debate about Swiss-EU bilateral relations (Milic 2015; Sciarini et al. 2015). In particular, the principle of the free movement of people, one of the four pillars underpinning the EU Single Market, has become a hotly contested issue, especially in the UK and Switzerland. In recent years, both countries have held popular referendums aimed, either directly or indirectly, at regaining national control over immigration. While in the run-up to these referendums many voters believed that having both access to the benefits of the EU and maintaining an autonomous immigration policy was possible (see Sciarini et al. 2015 for Switzerland; Owen and Walter 2017 for the UK), the EU's reaction has since made this option politically unlikely. Hence, it is highly plausible that voters will in the future be – even more explicitly – faced with a hard choice, as opting to limit immigration will come at the price of losing preferential access to the EU's Single Market and – vice versa – maintaining close economic integration with the EU will continue to come at the price of open borders. Whether voters are willing to pay one price or the other depends on their preference hierarchy between immigration control and economic integration.

Our paper focuses on Switzerland, a country that for almost twenty years successfully walked the line between ever-increasing economic integration with the EU and sustaining its political sovereignty. For a long time, this course was politically viable as the salience of EU integration declined in Swiss electoral politics over the course of the 2000s (Jenni 2015; Safi 2010). This low-salience context allowed for an increasingly hybrid development: while political elites in parliament as well as citizens at the polls repeatedly confirmed bilateral treaties with the EU (and therefore, implicitly, Swiss association with the internal market),<sup>2</sup> they simultaneously enacted a series of anti-immigration reforms.<sup>3</sup> In recent years, however, the relationship between the EU and Switzerland has re-emerged as a hotly contested issue in Swiss politics for two reasons. For one, the EU has demanded a

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<sup>2</sup> For instance, by accepting the Bilaterals I (2000), the Bilaterals II (2004), the Schengen/Dublin membership (2005) and by extending the free movement of people to Romania and Bulgaria (2009).

<sup>3</sup> For instance, constraining measures in asylum law (1994), on illegal immigrants (1999), reduced benefits for denied asylum seekers (2004), a ban on minarets (2009) and more restricted reasons for asylum seekers (2013).

broader, more comprehensive evolution of the bilateral treaties. More importantly for our purposes, the Swiss government's first efforts to implement the 2014 referendum vote in favour of immigration controls were effectively vetoed by the EU. The "implementation" Switzerland has eventually adopted in spring 2017 remained far behind what the 2014 vote had required (i.e. quotas and preferential treatment for nationals in the labour market). Consequently, the proponents of the original bill continue to consider their bill as not being implemented at all. Both of these developments have exposed the contradictions and tensions embedded in the current make-up of the Swiss-EU relationship.

Switzerland thus provides an institutional – because of direct democracy – and a policy context where voters' choice between access to the EU internal market and domestic control of immigration is not just a question of high theoretical relevance but also a realistic scenario. Although, in principle, the EU could make concessions to Switzerland with regard to the free movement of people, thus dissolving the trade-off, this scenario is unlikely. Not only has the EU repeatedly stated that it is unwilling to do so, the EU member states are also showing remarkable determination to preserve free movement of people even in the Brexit negotiations with the UK, a country that arguably has more bargaining power than Switzerland. For example, in summer 2018, public opinion in all remaining EU-27 member states opposed an arrangement with the UK that would end free movement of people but still give the UK privileged access to the EU internal market.<sup>4</sup> The choice between the benefits of a close economic arrangement with the EU and limiting immigration therefore provides an ideal ground to study voter behaviour in the face of hard trade-offs. In terms of theory, the paper also contributes to a small but growing literature that examines how individuals choose in trade-off situations (Busemeyer 2014; Häusermann et al. 2017; Jacobs and Matthews 2017; Walter et al. 2018). Empirically, we use data collected in the context of the 2015 Swiss parliamentary election, specifically the first wave of the Selects Panel/RCS study (SELECTS 2016).

In a first step, we identify those voters whose decision in the face of such a trade-off is not evident. On the one hand, this concerns voters with diverging preferences, i.e. being sceptical towards immigration but at the same time valuing the benefits of economic integration with the EU. We call this group of voters "potentially cross-pressured", as a choice between the two goals would confront them with a trade-off. On the other hand, this concerns voters who are indifferent on one or both questions. We call them "neutrals". Our analysis shows that the neutrals as well as the potentially cross-pressured, who favour both immigration control and economic integration, are sizeable groups within the Swiss electorate. By contrast, very few voters reject both immigration controls and economic integration. Moreover, those voters who favour both immigration control and economic integration are found almost exclusively on the right side of the political spectrum. Importantly, we also show that these voters are *neither* politically unaware *nor* politically inactive — a finding in line with Milic (2015), which indicates that diverging preferences are not simply a sign of a lack of understanding.

The second contribution of the paper is to examine how these voters would choose when pressed to make a choice between the two goals, i.e. when they go from being "potentially" or neutral to being "actually" cross-pressured. We focus on two determinants of revealed policy choices: vote choice and economic interests. Our analyses show that partisan closeness to the SVP is strongly associated with favouring immigration control

<sup>4</sup> The Economist (2018). "Britain Edges Closer to a Hard Brexit." <https://www.economist.com/graphic-detail/2018/08/21/britain-edges-closer-to-a-hard-brexite> [accessed: 21.08.2018].

over cooperation gains, while voter choices are less determined by their party preferences among the remainder of the electorate. In addition, we find little effect of individual material vulnerability on the choices of cross-pressured voters, which seems to sustain the finding that socio-cultural motives predominate in Switzerland when it comes to citizens' attitudes regarding economic openness and national sovereignty. Overall, our paper contributes to a better understanding of the challenges that political decision-makers face in times in which globalization-related trade-offs are becoming increasingly salient politically.

## 2. Theoretical Arguments: Determinants of Preference Profiles and Choice

To explore how Swiss voters respond to a trade-off between access to the benefits of European economic integration and immigration control, we proceed in two steps. In the first part, we draw on existing literature to derive theoretical expectations about who the potentially cross-pressured and neutral voters are who favour both maintaining the bilateral ties with the EU and restrictions on immigration. In the second part, we examine factors that explain their choice when confronted with a trade-off between these two objectives.

### *2.1. Which Voters Face a Potential Trade-Off between Immigration Control and Economic Integration?*

Regarding our first research question – the correlates of holding diverging preferences between economic integration and immigration control – we develop three sets of hypotheses, based on self-interest, electoral realignment and political sophistication. In this section, we focus on those potentially cross-pressured voters who favour both immigration limitation as well as tight economic integration with the EU, because they are the most relevant for the scenario we examine.<sup>5</sup>

First, in terms of material interests, we suggest that voters whose income depends strongly on European economic integration, but who at the same time are negatively exposed to immigration are most likely to hold diverging preferences. We expect this condition to hold amongst workers in strongly trade-dependent industries that benefit from free trade with the European market and who hence have a direct, material interest in maintaining the bilateral treaties (Dancygier and Walter 2015; Frieden and Rogowski 1996). At the same time, we would expect voters to support immigration control if they are subject to competition by immigrant workers in their occupational environment (Mughan et al. 2003). Hence, joint exposure to trade and immigration should enhance the likelihood of holding diverging preferences in favour of integration and against immigration.

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<sup>5</sup> Both for reasons of space and of theoretical relevance to the political trade-off at the heart of this contribution, we do not develop similarly detailed hypotheses for the alternatively cross-pressured (being against economic integration but in favour of open immigration) or for those voters who are indifferent on one of these two questions. As we show below, two empirical considerations sustain the theoretical rationale of our focus. First, the alternatively cross-pressured are a politically negligible group in Switzerland in terms of size. Second, while the neutrals are a sizeable category (which is the main reason why we decided to include them in all our analyses), they are also characterized by a decidedly lower level of political awareness, interest and participation. Hence, not articulating a preference on one of these highly salient key questions of contemporary Swiss politics seems to indicate a lack of interest rather than a clear substantial position.

Second, we expect the potentially cross-pressured to concentrate in the electorates of social-democratic and national-conservative political parties. We form this expectation partly due to the material interest-argument outlined above, but also from insights gained through work on electoral realignment. In terms of social structure, workers most exposed to both trade-dependence as well as immigrant competition are found in the manufacturing industries (Dancygier and Walter 2015). This manufacturing working class is the traditional stronghold of the political left, suggesting that a substantial share of the potentially cross-pressured voters should be part of the social-democratic electorate. At the same time, due to processes of electoral realignment that have reshaped partisan landscapes across Europe, this manufacturing working class has also become the new stronghold of national-conservative parties (Oesch and Rennwald 2018; Rennwald 2014). Given this, we expect to find these potentially cross-pressured concentrated both among the voters of social-democratic and national-conservative parties. Beyond arguments regarding the material interests of the manufacturing working class, the electoral realignment literature stresses the importance of socio-cultural value change, i.e. the more general and pervasive emergence of anti-immigration stances among the manual working class (Kriesi et al. 2006; Rydgren 2013). These anti-immigrant attitudes have been found to be to some extent independent of direct exposure to economic immigration threat, but rather rooted in cultural fears (Hainmüller and Hopkins 2014). However, this additional argument only reinforces the expectation – based on material interest – that we are likely to find a concentration of the potentially cross-pressured voters among those parties who mobilize the working class most effectively.

To the extent that the Swiss Social Democratic Party (SP) still mobilizes a substantial part of the lower-income voters, we expect this party to comprise a sizeable share of these citizens with preferences against immigration and in favour of economic integration. On the side of the national-conservative parties, we expect to find this preference profile particularly amongst the voters of the Swiss People's Party (SVP), which over the past two decades has been mobilizing strongly among the working class precisely on the issue of immigration (Traber 2015). However, anti-immigration stances are not exclusive to the far right in Switzerland. To the extent that moderate-centrist right-wing parties have also moved towards more immigration-critical stances over time, their voters may also hold contradictory positions on European integration and immigration-control. This certainly holds for the Swiss market-liberal party FDP, which has taken increasingly socio-culturally conservative positions over the past two decades (Bornschier 2015), while emphasizing economic policies strongly in its election programmes (Traber 2015). Among these socially conservative voters of the FDP and SVP (and beyond working-class conservatism), we would also expect high income individuals to have a higher probability of being cross-pressured, because they have a more direct interest in the status quo of economic interdependence with the EU.

Besides material self-interest and socio-cultural electoral realignment, political sophistication is a third potential determinant of being both in favour of immigration control and economic integration, based on the assumption that more sophisticated voters are aware of the possible tensions that diverging attitudes on different dimensions may imply (since they know that these dimensions are linked in actual politics). They therefore anticipate potential trade-offs in their preference articulation. In contrast, less sophisticated voters may be less aware of the issue-linkages and constraints that exist between different dimensions. In general, political psychology has become very sceptical regarding the consistency and sophistication of policy preferences among voters (Lupia

2015; Mansfield and Mutz 2009), especially in direct democratic referendums (Seabrook et al. 2015), arguing that many voters may be unaware of internal inconsistencies between different policy choices. In line with this argument, evidence from the Swiss 2014 mass immigration proposal (Sciarini et al. 2015), the Greek 2015 bailout referendum (Walter et al. 2018) and anecdotal evidence from the Brexit referendum suggests for example that more highly educated voters are more aware of the constraints international integration implies for national policy-making. Based on this literature, we would expect to find potentially cross-pressured voters particularly among citizens with low levels of political sophistication, possibly even among politically alienated citizens. Because less sophisticated voters are also less likely to participate in popular referendums, this argument suggests that cross-pressured and neutral voters should be less likely to turn out to vote. If that were the case, their political relevance in deciding the policy course for Switzerland would be relatively weak.

## 2.2. *How Do Voters Decide when Faced with a Trade-Off?*

Besides theorizing the determinants of holding diverging policy preferences on economic integration and limiting immigration, we also want to understand the determinants of choice when faced with a question that links several dimensions in an irreconcilable way. In theorizing these determinants, we contrast self-interested and heuristic motivations.<sup>6</sup>

A broad literature emphasizes rational-choice based models of individual exposure, vulnerability and self-interest, based on the argument that voters prioritize market access or immigration control depending on their economic situation. For reasons already outlined above, we expect voters in trade-dependent occupations to favour economic openness, because their employment depends on market access and thus the bilateral treaties. In contrast, workers in occupations threatened by immigration are expected to prioritize immigration control, as the free movement of people increases competition for employment (Dancygier and Walter 2015).

Alternative determinants of choice are theorized in the literature on decisional heuristics, which shows that in situations of high complexity, heuristics have a strong impact on the choices citizens make. Among these heuristics, partisan heuristics are particularly relevant, especially in a situation of intense party polarization and competition (Druckman et al. 2013; Lupia and McCubbins 1998; Nicholson 2005). The relevance of partisan heuristics has also been demonstrated in a direct democratic context (Emmenegger and Marx 2018; Kriesi 2005). Hence, in situations of high complexity, we may expect voters to follow the recommendations of their preferred party. In particular SVP voters, given their party's clear position in favour of immigration control (Traber 2015), can be expected to choose immigration control over market access. In contrast, Christian-democratic (CVP) and in particular liberal (FDP) voters are expected to prioritize market access due to these parties' stronger emphasis on economic policies (Traber 2015). Both of these parties recommended their voters to reject the SVP's mass immigration proposal in 2014. Finally, the social democratic SP is pro-immigration and moderately anti-business, but at the same time the most consistent supporter of the EU among Switzerland's main parties. The party had also recommended its voters to reject the SVP proposal. Hence, we expect SP voters

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<sup>6</sup> We do not consider political sophistication, as there is little evidence to suggest that lacking sophistication might make voters more prone toward choosing national sovereignty over cooperation gains, or vice versa.

to prioritize the bilateral treaties, although not necessarily for reasons of market access but rather due to a generally pro-EU stance.

### 3. Data and Operationalization

The 2015 first wave of the SELECTS Panel/RCS study (SELECTS 2016) provides an ideal setup to examine the above hypotheses for two reasons. First, the sample is large enough (>11'000) to identify a sufficient number of potentially cross-pressured voters and even conduct analyses at the level of party electorates. Second, the survey not only contains all relevant data on party preferences, voter sophistication and socio-structural characteristics, but it also contains a battery of detailed questions on voter evaluations of both immigration and the Swiss-EU bilateral treaties as well as a choice-question that puts the respondents exactly in the trade-off situation that we theorize.

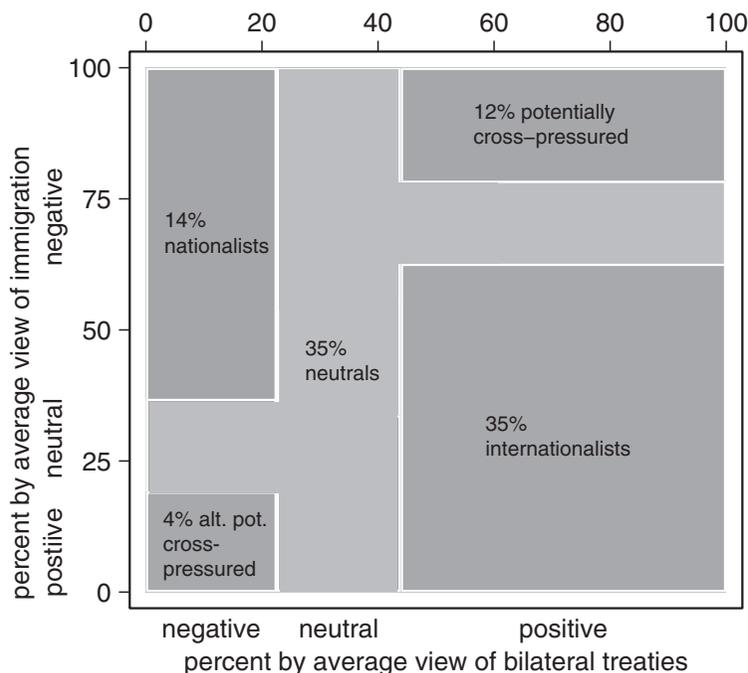
#### 3.1. *Dependent Variables: Preference Groups and Choice*

Our analysis focuses on voters with divergent policy preferences on distinct, but related policy dimensions, i.e. immigration control and maintaining the Swiss-EU bilateral treaties. To identify the potentially cross-pressured and neutral respondents, we first determine whether a respondent is generally in favour, neutral or opposed to these policies based on questions about how they perceive the effects of these policies. We then classify respondents based on their stance on both policy dimensions. The variable names in the SELECTS Panel/RCS study are given in parentheses.

To identify respondents' attitudes on immigration control, we examine their attitudes on immigration and compute the average of their assessments of the effects of immigration on aggregate welfare in Switzerland (f15650) and on Swiss culture (f15651). Regarding respondents' evaluation of the bilateral treaties, we compute their average assessments of the effects of Swiss-EU bilateral treaties on the economy in Switzerland (f15652) and its labour market (f15653). These assessments are measured on a five-point Likert scale ranging from "very negative effect" (1) to "very positive effect" (5), with a middle category of having "neither [a] positive nor negative effect" (3). Those with an average value of 3 are classified as neutral (18% for immigration and 21% for the bilateral treaties), whereas those with values greater than 3 are coded as holding a positive view (36% for immigration control and 56% for the bilateral treaties) and those with values lower than 3 as holding a negative view (46% for immigration control and 23% the bilateral treaties). Subsequently, we combine these assessments to identify five different groups of respondents: *potentially cross-pressured voters*, who view both the bilateral treaties and immigration control positively; *nationalists*, who favour immigration control and oppose the bilateral treaties; *internationalists*, who evaluate both immigration and the bilateral treaties positively; *alternative potentially cross-pressured voters*, who oppose both immigration control and the bilateral treaties; and *neutral respondents*, who have a neutral stance on at least one dimension.

Figure 1 shows that the relative size of these groups differs significantly. The biggest group (about 35%) are the internationalists. This large share is perhaps not surprising in a country that has long been able to attract highly educated, ethnically similar migrants and that has thrived based on its integration in the world economy, but the result also resonates with evidence from EU countries that an overwhelming majority (81% in November 2017) supports the free movement of people (Eurobarometer 2017). In contrast,

Figure 1: Size of Groups Identified by Attitudes on Immigration and Bilateral Treaties



14% of respondents are nationalists, who worry about immigration and view the bilateral treaties negatively. About 35% of the respondents have neutral views about at least one of the issues.<sup>7</sup> 4% of respondents evaluate the bilateral treaties negatively but hold positive views on immigration, i.e. they hold diverging preferences in an alternative, symmetrical way to the one of interest here. One can think of a kind of left-wing euroscepticism, which seems to be marginal in Switzerland.

The group of most theoretical and political interest for this paper, *potentially cross-pressured voters*, comprises 12% of all respondents. This may seem a small group at first glance. However, in a direct democratic context like Switzerland, where turnout is usually low and referendum decisions are often taken by a small margin, a group with a high turnout likelihood and a potentially malleable vote intention can quickly become politically important. In addition, added up with the “neutrals”, they result in a very large share of voters whose relative salience for the two contrasting goals is unclear. Given the categorical nature of this dependent variable, we use multinomial logit models in the first part of our analysis.

The second part of our paper examines how these 12% of potentially cross-pressured and the 35% of neutrals react when forced to choose between migration control and

<sup>7</sup> We also explored all findings with a stricter definition of “neutrals” as being indifferent on both dimensions (rather than just one dimension). In this way, only 4.6% of the respondents are neutrals. We decided against this operationalization for two reasons. First, being indifferent on one dimension is enough to make the choice between the goals unclear (especially given the fact that choosing the middle category on such sensitive questions may imply scepticism). Second, a narrow definition would have made the categories “nationalists” and “internationalists” very heterogeneous.

maintaining the bilateral treaties. Our choice variable is based on the question “If you had to make a choice, would you rather keep the bilateral agreements with the EU or limit immigration?” (f15655). Respondents could answer in four categories (“restrict immigration”, “rather restrict immigration”, “rather maintain bilateral agreements”, “maintain bilateral agreements”). Only 218 out of 11’073 respondents (2.0%) and only 3 out of 1’300 cross-pressured voters (0.2%) chose not to answer this question, which gives us confidence that they consider this a meaningful, realistic question, and that they are indeed able to rank their preferences (i.e. to “put a price” on one of the policy goals). Overall, respondents in our sample are quite divided when asked about this choice: whereas 43% prefer to (rather) restrict immigration, 57% want to (rather) maintain the bilateral agreements. Given the ordinal nature of this dependent variable, we use ordered logit models in the second part of the analysis.

### 3.2. *Independent Variables*

As discussed above, our analyses focus on three main families of independent variables: material interests, electoral realignment dynamics as reflected in party preference and political sophistication.

We identify respondents’ *material interests* based on the extent to which they benefit from economic integration with the EU and to which extent they would benefit from a more restrictive immigration regime in terms of labour market competition. Benefits from international economic cooperation are operationalized as the share of domestic employment embodied in foreign demand in a respondent’s industry of employment. This is computed by dividing the total number of Swiss jobs that are sustained by consumers in foreign markets in an industry (OECD 2016) by the total number of employees by sector in Switzerland (Bundesamt für Statistik 2017). The indicator ranges from a minimum of 3% in health and social services to a maximum of 81% in consulting, auditing and R&D. We then match this data based on a respondent’s self-declared industry of employment (f21750).<sup>8</sup> Although this is a new measure that has not yet been used widely in political economy research, we prefer this measure to standard sectoral measures of trade exposure as it better captures the extent to which an industry’s integration into the global economy affects domestic jobs (Ahmad et al. 2017). Nonetheless, we also run robustness checks with two more conventional measures of trade exposure (e.g. Hays et al. 2005; Walter 2010): a hand-coded dummy for tradeable industries<sup>9</sup> and a numeric measure that divides the sum of exports and imports in an industry by the industry’s size.<sup>10</sup> Finally, in order to also take the output side of the bilateral treaties into account, we also examine the role of gross monthly household income (f28910), assuming that those with higher incomes tend to be among the beneficiaries of the existing regime of Swiss-EU bilateral treaties.

Exposure to immigration-related labour market pressure is measured with the share of immigrant workers in a respondent’s sector of employment (f21750), based on data from the Swiss Labour Force Survey (SAKE). It ranges from a minimum of 7.4% in public

<sup>8</sup> Those not on the labour market are coded as not being exposed. The unemployed are assigned the mean value for all working respondents since the data does not provide information about their industry.

<sup>9</sup> The following industries are coded as tradeable: manufacturing, retail, consulting/auditing/R&D, private services, financial/insurance services, tourism, transport/shipping, agriculture and ICT.

<sup>10</sup> Data for the latter measure are from the OECD STAN database. It contains many missings, which were recoded as zero (no exposure). For all trade variables, those not in paid work are coded as not exposed.

administration, defence and social security to a maximum of 46.7% in the hospitality and restaurant industry. As a robustness check, we also examine the industry-specific unemployment rate (Bundesamt für Statistik 2017).

We operationalize *party preference* using a “vote intention” question (f1085\_90) included in the survey. Because the survey was completed *before* the 2015 election, this variable gives us the most precise measure of respondents’ partisan preferences. We generate four dummy variables for the four biggest Swiss parties: the national-conservative Swiss People’s Party (SVP), the Social Democrats (SP), the Liberals (FDP) and the centre-right Christian Democrats (CVP). All those with no vote intention or those planning to vote for another smaller party constitute the baseline category. We also check the robustness of our results by re-estimating all models using party identification rather than vote intention, using the question about which party the respondents “feels close to” (f14010rec) as well as left-right self-placement, measured on an 11-point scale (f15201).

A third potential independent variable is *political sophistication*. In line with Luskin (1990), we operationalize each of the three dimensions of political sophistication separately: We use attention to political campaigns (f10160) to capture the political *information* people are exposed to, education (f21310) to measure respondents’ *ability* to assimilate and organize this information and political interest (f10100) to capture their *motivation* to do so. As a distinct, but related concept, we also develop an indicator for regular political *participation* based on questions asking whether the respondent participated in the last federal election of 2011 (f10200r), the last federal vote preceding the interview (f10750) and in how many of the last ten federal votes (f12501, recoded to range from 0 to 1).<sup>11</sup>

### 3.3. Control Variables

We also add a series of control variables to our models. We use a dummy variable to control for respondents living in rural areas, defined by the Federal Statistical Office as rural municipalities without urban character (stla), because the urban/rural cleavage is an important political dividing line in Switzerland. In addition, we control for unemployed or retired respondents (f21400), because the unemployed are generally economically vulnerable, while the retired are less affected by the economic implications of the bilateral treaties. Furthermore, we control for male respondents (sex) and for the respondents’ age in years (age). Finally, we measure the importance that individual respondents attribute to particular policy concerns with indicators of issue importance: all respondents were asked how important the following policy fields were to them (answer ranging from 1 “rather not important”, “rather important”, 3 “very important” to 4 “extremely important”): EU Policy (f15310a), migration policy (f15310b) and economic policy (f15310e).

## 4. Analysis I: Who Are the Potentially Cross-Pressured and Neutral Voters?

In the first part of our analysis, we examine the correlates of belonging to one of the identified preference groups within the Swiss political landscape. As discussed above, our analyses focus in turn on the role of material interests, party preference and political sophistication.

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<sup>11</sup> A factor analysis shows that the three variables load on a single factor.

#### 4.1. *Material Interests*

Our first hypothesis focuses on the role of material interests and suggests that respondents who benefit from the bilateral treaties but also experience labour market pressure from immigration should be most likely to exhibit diverging policy preferences on integration and immigration. The hypothesis suggests an interaction term between the exposure of a respondent's workplace to international trade and its exposure to immigration. Potentially cross-pressured voters should be particularly prevalent among those who work in industries in which substantial employment is generated through foreign demand and in which the share of immigrant workers is high. We employ multinomial logit models to analyse and control for socio-demographic indicators and measures of political sophistication and participation.

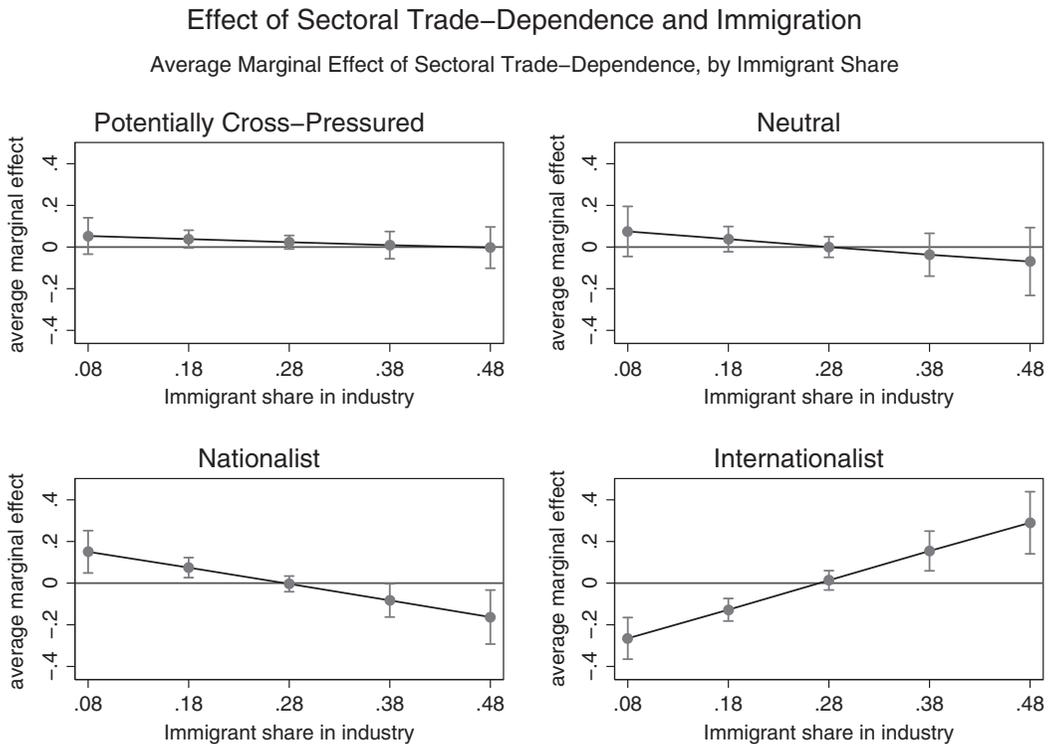
Figure 2 shows the marginal effect of an industry's reliance on foreign demand for job creation, conditional on the immigrant share in a respondent's industry. In contrast to our expectations, neither working in a trade-dependent sector nor being exposed to many immigrant workers in the workplace affects the likelihood of holding divergent preferences or of being neutral in statistically significant ways.<sup>12</sup> Of course, given that we can only proxy for material interests, these results should be interpreted with some caution. Nonetheless, the evidence suggests that self-interested, employment-based concerns about the consequences of immigration and the bilateral treaties do not correlate closely with holding divergent and potentially conflicting views on economic openness and immigration. Rather, trade-dependence is associated with being nationalist and internationalist: those working in industries that rely on international markets but also feature high shares of immigrant workers are significantly more likely to be internationalists and less likely to be nationalist. High levels of trade exposure are *only* associated with nationalist positions when respondents work in contexts in which they are not exposed to many immigrant workers – which is in line with existing research that shows that direct exposure to immigrants in the workplace does not correlate with immigration-sceptic positions (Hainmüller and Hopkins 2014). Likewise, high immigrant shares significantly increase nationalist positions only among those who are not exposed to international trade at all. Clearly, material factors matter for the assessment of immigration and the bilateral treaties, but in less straightforward ways than a simple competition logic would suggest.

#### 4.2. *Party Preference*

To get an idea of the political parties in which the potentially cross-pressured voters can be found, we reconstruct Figure 1 for each of the four major political parties. As discussed above, we expect potentially cross-pressured voters to concentrate mainly among SP, SVP and FDP voters – given that working-class voters are strongly represented in both SVP and SP, and conservative higher income voters are more strongly represented in the

<sup>12</sup> See Table A1 in the online appendix. The results hold when we operationalize trade exposure with a dummy for tradeable industries and when we use sectoral trade exposure. Results also hold when we examine the effect of trade exposure conditional on education, as recent applications of new trade theory (Melitz 2003) to the individual level suggest (Walter 2017), and when we operationalize labour market pressure with the sectoral unemployment rate. None of the variables of interests has any explanatory power when it comes to the alternative potentially cross-pressured, which is why we leave them out here.

Figure 2: Exposure to Trade at Varying Levels of Immigrant Share in Industry as Determinants of Attitudes on Immigration and the Bilateral Treaties

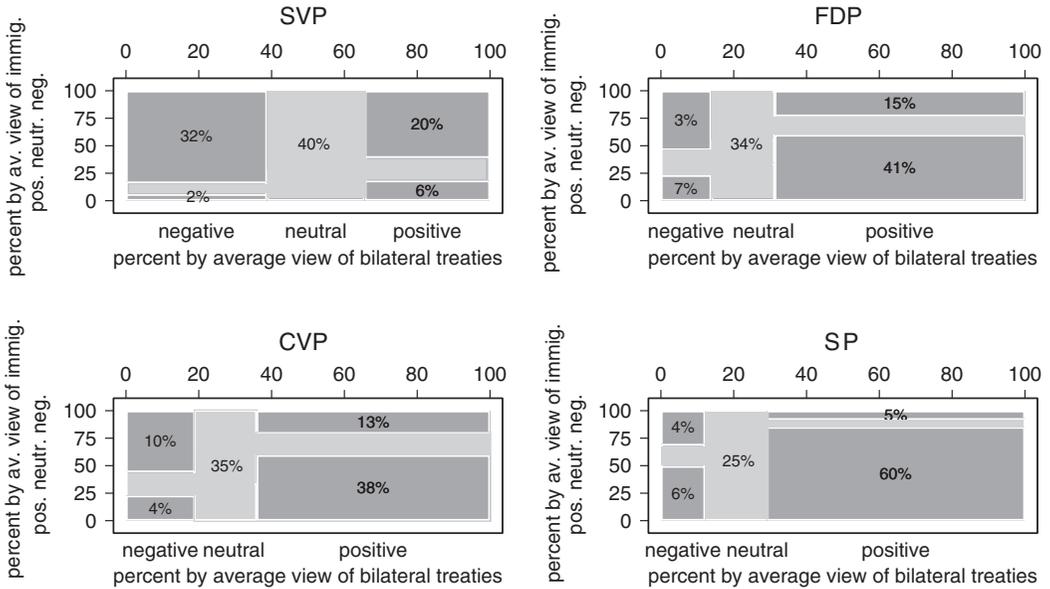


Note: 95% confidence intervals.

FDP and SVP. The findings in Figure 3 are striking: in Switzerland, the potentially cross-pressured voters are almost exclusively concentrated among voters on the right side of the political spectrum. Whereas only about 5% of SP voters correspond to this preference profile, this share is much higher among CVP, FDP and SVP voters. The share is highest among SVP voters, where one fifth (20%) of respondents is potentially cross-pressured, while 32% are nationalists (the biggest group among SVP voters). Among FDP voters, we find that 15% hold diverging policy preferences (vs. 41% of internationalists as the biggest group) and among the voters of the CVP, we find 13% of them (vs. 38% of internationalists).

Our descriptive analysis thus suggests that in Switzerland, voters who favour both economic integration and restricted immigration regulation are predominantly concentrated on the right side of the political spectrum. To examine in more detail the partisan composition of voters who are either potentially cross-pressured or neutral, we conduct multivariate analyses, in which we estimate the likelihood of falling into each of the five groups for all respondents in our sample using multinomial logit models that control for potential alternative explanations.<sup>13</sup> These analyses confirm our descriptive findings that the share of potentially cross-pressured voters in the two conservative parties

Figure 3: Size of Groups Identified by Attitudes on Immigration and Bilateral Treaties by Main Political Parties



on the right, SVP and FDP (and to a lesser extent CVP), is significantly larger, whereas the reverse holds true for SP voters.<sup>14</sup> As expected, we find some evidence for left-wing party preference being linked to “alternatively” diverging preferences, but this form of left-wing euroscepticism seems to be a rather marginal phenomenon within the Swiss partisan landscape. In combination with the weak findings we uncover concerning material interest, this finding points to the high relevance of socio-cultural electoral realignment in Switzerland (Rennwald 2014). With regard to our socio-demographic control variables, our analyses also show that having a high income, being male, retired and living in a rural area increases the probability of being potentially cross-pressured.

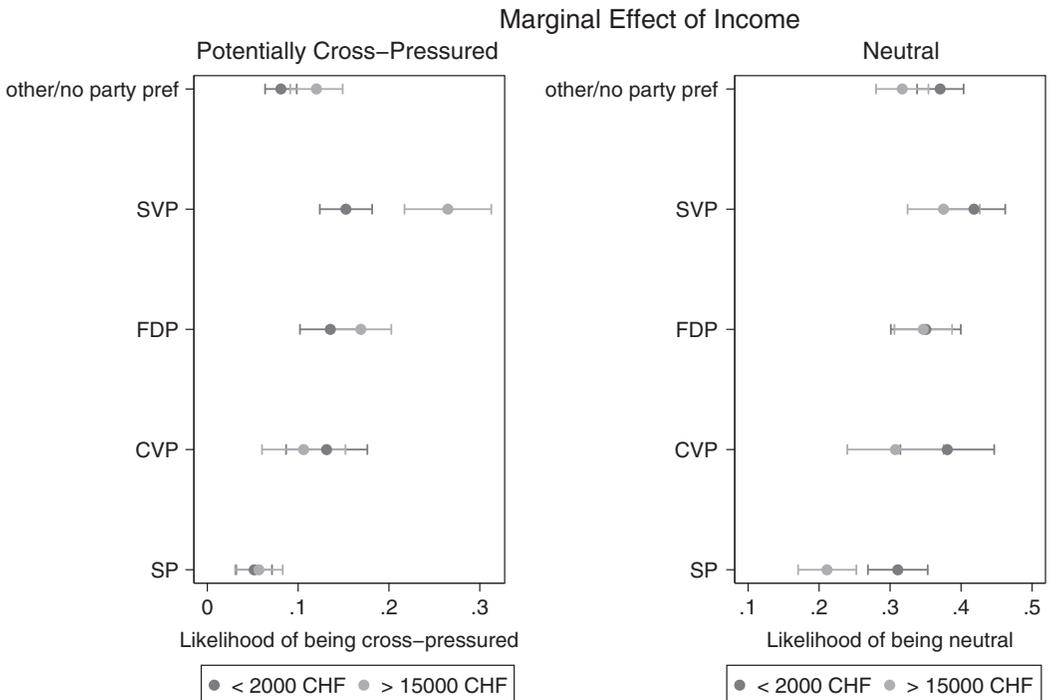
Moreover, our findings underscore how strongly the divide between nationalist and internationalist policy positions structures and exacerbates party polarization in Switzerland: SVP voters are about 25.7 percentage points more likely to have negative evaluations of both immigration and the bilateral treaties (i.e. being a “nationalist”) than SP voters and a whopping 50.4 percentage points less likely of having internationalist preferences than SP voters. This divide also exists between the SVP and the other major parties: FDP voters are 21.1% and CVP voters 19.6% less likely to hold nationalist positions than SVP voters, and 29.0% and 30.8% more likely to be internationalists.

To explore our findings in somewhat more detail, we next explore how income interacts with partisanship. In Figure 4, we report the likelihood of being potentially cross-pressured and neutral for low- and high-income voters (lowest and highest category) by partisan preference.<sup>15</sup> It shows that throughout the party spectrum, lower

<sup>14</sup> Additional analyses focusing on left-right self-placement confirm this finding (see Figure A1 in the online appendix).

<sup>15</sup> See also Table A3 in the online appendix. Results are robust to using party identification.

Figure 4: The Effect of Income and Partisan Preference on the Likelihood of Being Potentially Cross-Pressured or Neutral



Note: 95% confidence intervals.

income is associated with a higher probability of being neutral, significantly so among SP voters. When it comes to the potentially cross-pressured voters, there are no statistically significant differences with one striking exception: within the SVP, a party highly sceptical of both immigration and the bilateral treaties, high-income voters indeed diverge massively from low-income voters and are much more likely to be potentially cross-pressured than their poorer co-partisans. This difference remains statistically significant even when we compare low- to medium-income respondents with a monthly household income of 7'000-8'000 CHF (category 7 out of 15). In a striking contrast, among SP voters, there is no difference at all in the likelihood of being potentially cross-pressured among low- and high-income respondents.

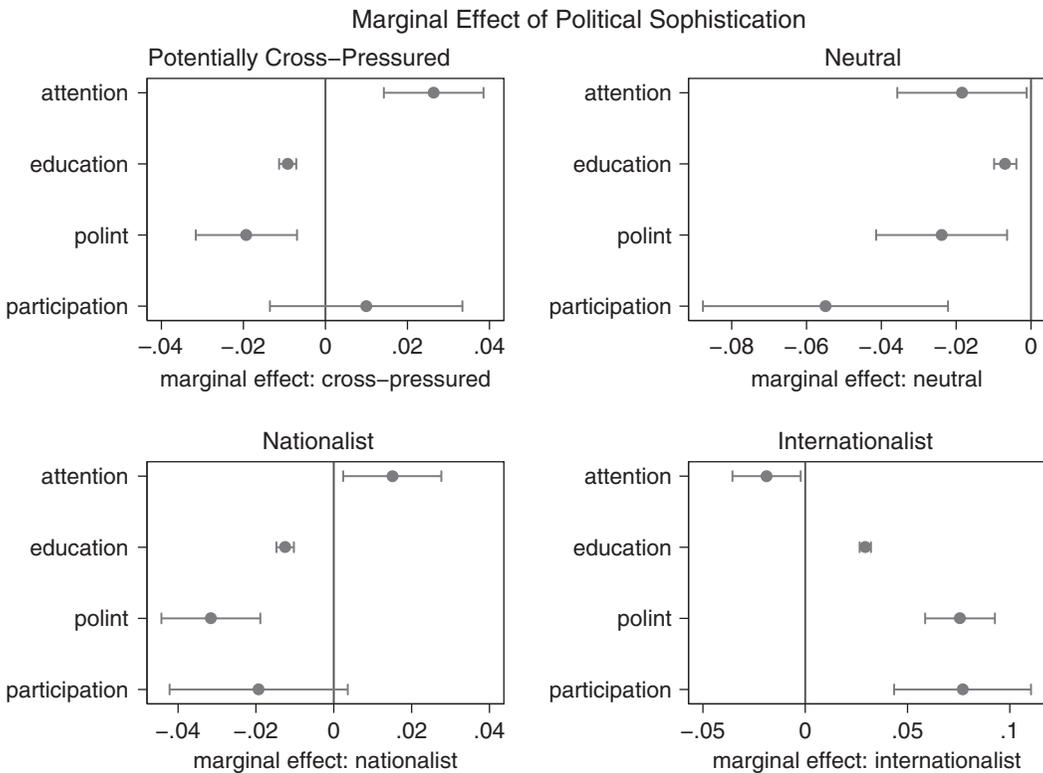
#### 4.3. Political Sophistication and Participation

In a final step, we examine whether potentially cross-pressured voters are simply unaware of the fact that their policy preferences may be politically inconsistent. We do so by testing whether three different dimensions of political sophistication – information (measured as campaign attention), ability (measured with education) and motivation (measured as political interest) – as well as political participation serve as good predictors for a respondent's preference profile.

Our findings are mixed, as Figure 5 shows. On the one hand, we find evidence that those with lower levels of education and those less interested in politics are more likely to be potentially cross-pressured. This is in line with the expectation that potentially cross-pressured voters may simply not understand that achieving both goals is likely to be impossible. At the same time, however, and in stark contrast to neutral voters, there is also a strong positive correlation between the attention respondents pay to the campaign and being potentially cross-pressured.<sup>16</sup> Interestingly, the effects of political sophistication on the likelihood of holding diverging policy preferences show a similar profile for the cross-pressured as they do for the likelihood of being nationalist. In contrast, political sophistication (with the exception of attention to the campaign) and political participation increase the likelihood of being an internationalist.

This finding suggests that while less educated and informed in general, the potentially cross-pressured (in contrast to the neutrals) are not generally less politicized. Rather, they seem to pay attention to issue-specific referendum campaigns. This is related to Milic’s (2015) finding that voters are generally well-informed on issues pertaining to sovereignty

Figure 5: Political Sophistication and Preference Profiles



Note: 95% confidence intervals.

<sup>16</sup> Note that causality may run both ways, as it is possible that those who are cross-pressured feel more in need of additional information and therefore pay more attention to the campaign.

and immigration. It also suggests that campaign messages may be particularly effective among this group of voters. How campaigns matter will likely depend on whether they pay attention to the full breadth of arguments in the campaign, or whether they selectively pay attention to one side of a referendum campaign. In any case, the finding that potentially cross-pressured voters tend to be campaign-sensitive suggests that their opinions may be rather malleable, making them a potentially interesting group to target during referendum campaigns. This is even more important given that they are equally likely to participate politically as other voters with clear opinions, and significantly more likely to participate than neutral voters (see Figure 5). It is therefore particularly relevant to know how these voters would choose if faced with a trade-off.

When it comes to the neutral voters, our second category of interest, the findings are quite different, as they indeed seem to be generally less politicized and also less mobilized. However, since they certainly represent an important mobilization potential for political parties (and since we know that in decisive direct democratic votes, especially regarding socio-cultural decisions related to immigration concerns, participation rates are higher than usual), they are still a relevant group politically, which is why we also take an interest in the choice profile of neutral voters.

## 5. Analysis II: What Determines Policy Choices?

In this section, we focus on the subset of potentially cross-pressured and neutral voters and ask which factors drive their choice when they are pressed to take a stand in favour of either immigration-control or maintaining the bilateral treaties. We start by establishing that we have the necessary variation in our data to study this question empirically. Table 1 shows that the group of potentially cross-pressured and neutral respondents is rather evenly split between those who – when asked to decide – would want to maintain the bilateral treaties (44% and 49%, respectively) and those who would want to restrict immigration (56% and 51%, respectively). Table 1 further confirms that respondents have correctly understood the trade-off question. Responses are consistent with their attitudes on the benefits of immigration and the bilateral treaties (e.g., most nationalists would rather restrict immigration).

In the theory section, we have developed two main theoretical expectations for choice: economic vulnerability to either trade or migration (if voters decide in line with their material self-interest) and partisan heuristics (if voters follow party stances). In the following, we test the correlations between these respective factors using ordered logistic regression models that regress the decision voters indicate on a range of indicators of

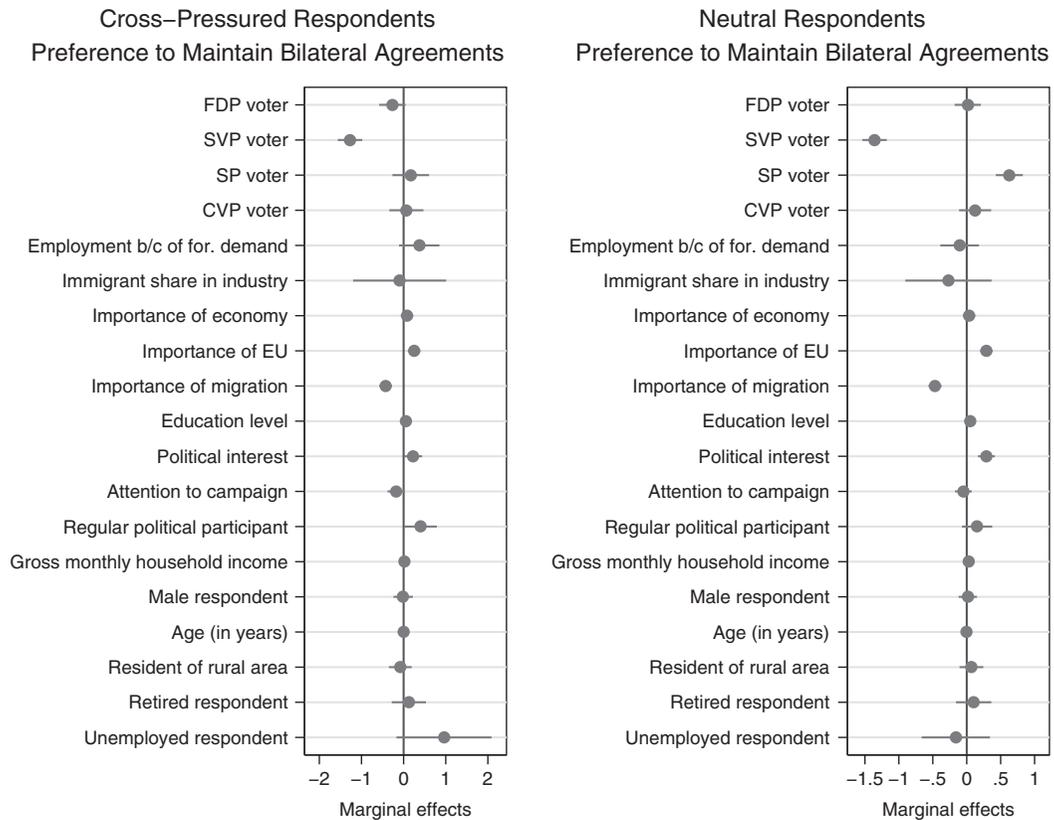
Table 1: Preferences when Facing Trade-Off between Restricting Immigration and Maintaining Bilateral Treaties

	Potentially cross-pressured	Neutrals	Nationalists	Internationalists	Alternative pot. cross- pressured	Total
Restrict immigration	722 (56%)	1'858 (51%)	1'329 (88%)	395 (11%)	213 (47%)	4'517 (43%)
Maintain bilateral treaties	575 (44%)	1'760 (49%)	183 (12%)	3'352 (89%)	240 (53%)	6'110 (57%)
Total	1'297	3'618	1'512	3'747	453	10'627

economic vulnerability, partisanship and a set of control variables (issue importance, political participation and sophistication, income, education, gender, age, rural/urban, retired/active and employment status). Figure 6 displays the marginal effects of regressing choice for the (now *indeed*, not potentially anymore) cross-pressured and neutral respondents respectively.<sup>17</sup>

Figure 6 provides no strong evidence of material interest, i.e. exposure to trade or immigration, driving the choice of cross-pressured or neutral respondents. Neither does the share of domestic employment embodied in foreign demand result in a choice of favouring economic openness, nor does the share of immigrants in the industry sector condition the choice of an individual.<sup>18</sup> Even when we interact employment in trade-dependent sectors

Figure 6: Probability Cross-Pressured (Left Panel) and Neutral Respondents (Right Panel) Prefer Maintaining Bilateral Agreements to Limiting Immigration



Note: 95% confidence intervals.

<sup>17</sup> Table A4 in the online appendix presents the full regression table. We have also looked at a more “extreme” operationalization of cross-pressured respondents, i.e. respondents with a *very* negative view of immigration (average position of four or higher) and *very* positive view of the bilateral agreements (average position of two or smaller). Our results also hold for this subset of respondents.

<sup>18</sup> Results do not change when the models are re-estimated using a dummy for employment in tradeable sectors (in place of the share of domestic employment embodied in foreign demand) and the sectoral unemployment rate (in place of the sector-specific share of immigrants).

Table 2: Policy Choice and Party Preference among Cross-Pressured and Neutral Respondents

Party	Preference to restrict immigration		Preference to maintain bilateral agreements		Number of voters		Share of cross-pressured and neutral voters among all party supporters
	Cross-pressured	Neutral	Cross-pressured	Neutral	Cross-pressured	Neutral	
SVP	75.9%	79.4%	24.1%	20.6%	461	873	57.8%
SP	44.2%	31.1%	55.8%	68.9%	104	525	29.2%
FDP	46.2%	42.8%	53.8%	57.2%	286	641	47.7%
CVP	40.7%	42.1%	59.3%	57.9%	123	321	46.1%

with exposure to immigrant workers in the sector (not shown), we find no evidence for direct vulnerability driving the effects. There is thus little evidence in support of the economic vulnerability hypothesis.<sup>19</sup> Turning to the control variables, we find evidence for an impact of subjective issue importance on the choice at hand. Voters who deem immigration a particularly important topic are significantly more likely to forego the bilateral treaties, whereas voters who deem EU relations more important choose the other way. Attributing high importance to economic policy is not significantly associated with favouring bilateral treaties, which is in line with the varying distributional consequences of the treaties on different societal groups. Finally, we find positive effects of education and political interest on a preference to maintain the bilateral treaties.

Next, we turn to the relation between partisanship (interpreted as party cues) and respondents' choice to the trade-off question. We distinguish between respondents supporting the four main Swiss parties (SVP, SP, FDP and CVP). All other respondents are used as a reference category. Figure 6 shows a strong negative link between voting for the SVP and preferring to maintain the bilateral treaties. In other words, cross-pressured SVP voters have a strong and unidirectional tendency to opt against the bilateral treaties when asked to make a choice between immigration control and cooperation with the EU. As Figure 6 shows, this is the case for both cross-pressured and neutral respondents. In contrast, SP voters display the opposite effect, which is however considerably less robust. In particular, the positive effect of the SP party preference is significant only for neutral respondents but not for cross-pressured ones.<sup>20</sup> For CVP and FDP voters we do not find a similarly strong effect, meaning that their voters are more heterogeneous in their choice preferences and seem to be less in line with party cues in this situation.

Looking at the electorates of the SVP, SP, FDP and CVP separately, Table 2 shows the distribution of cases among these four electorates. We see that except for the SVP and to a lesser extent the SP, voters are rather evenly split. In addition, Table 2 shows one more time that cross-pressured and neutral respondents can be found particularly among right-wing party supporters.

<sup>19</sup> Risk exposure may drive attribution of issue importance and hence – indirectly – affect voters' choice. Yet as Table A4 in the online appendix shows, the effect of economic vulnerability remains weak even when the issue importance variables are removed from the models.

<sup>20</sup> Using party identification further confirms this finding. Respondents feeling close to the SVP overwhelmingly prefer immigration control.

How can we explain the large share of cross-pressured and neutral respondents amongst SVP voters that clearly value immigration control higher than cooperation gains? In line with these voters' pronounced self-reported attention to campaigns, we interpret this correlational finding as evidence for the importance of party cues, i.e. the importance of party messages for the preferences and priorities of their partisans. The obvious alternative interpretation is reverse causality, i.e. people vote SVP because they value immigration control over economic integration. However, our models control for the issue importance of immigration, which means that the correlation between party preference and choice is robust among voters who attribute similar importance to the issue of immigration.

Of course, one may still worry that the SVP partisans choose immigration control over economic integration because they do not believe that there really is a choice to be made, i.e. they think both goals may be compatible. Indeed, it seems as if – in fall 2015 – at least some SVP voters were still not entirely convinced that there is indeed a trade-off between restricting immigration and maintaining the bilateral agreements (Sciarini et al. 2015: 274). Parties play a key role in articulating or denying such trade-offs. Hence, while parties might provide important cues that help voters rank their policy goals when facing a trade-off, parties might also communicate their supporters whether there is a trade-off in the first place. While there were very few signs at the time of the survey that the EU would allow Switzerland to reintroduce immigration control measures without considering this to be a breach of the bilateral agreements, we cannot rule out this scenario entirely in our analyses. However, the fact that hardly any respondent refused to answer the choice-question certainly provides evidence against this interpretation. In any case, our results show the clear priority given to restricting immigration over maintaining the bilateral agreements among these voters.

## 6. Conclusion

How do voters respond when forced to choose between the goals of economic integration and national sovereignty when they support both? We have examined this question in the context of Switzerland, where the choice between maintaining the bilateral treaties with the EU and limiting immigration has been a politically salient issue for several years. Our analysis shows that although most Swiss voters have clear preferences on this issue – either preferring more nationalist or internationalist solutions – about 12% of Swiss voters are potentially cross-pressured because they welcome the economic integration of Switzerland in the EU common market, but also think that immigration tends to have negative economic and cultural effects for the country. These voters are mainly found on the right side of the political spectrum and among those with higher incomes. In contrast, but in line with a substantial amount of recent research, material exposure to trade and immigration does not explain why respondents hold such diverging policy preferences. Political sophistication may be somewhat lower among potentially cross-pressured voters, though this voter group tends to pay more attention to referendum campaigns. Hence, it is important for us to understand how they rank the two policy goals they support simultaneously. When these voters are forced to take a decision between maintaining the Swiss-EU bilateral treaties and restricting immigration, we find that the strongest predictor for their choice is partisanship, as individuals that are likely to vote SVP are also much more likely to opt for immigration restrictions. These determinants of choice also hold for the large group of respondents who indicate a neutral stance on one of the two policy goals.

What does this mean for Swiss-EU relations? Which arguments and political compensations could sway voters with diverging or unclear preferences in the event of a decisive vote on one side or the other? First, since cross-pressured voters are almost absent among the left, further economic compensation measures in return for the political agreement to economic openness (“flankierende Massnahmen”) may not be decisive in convincing their voters to support further EU economic integration. This is of course a strong interpretation of our findings and we cannot rule out the possibility that there are very few cross-pressured voters among the left because of the already existing compensation measures. In any case, those who identify with the political left in Switzerland have a clear and strong tendency to prioritize EU integration over immigration control, even if they actually support stronger immigration control. This finding, however, may not travel seamlessly to other countries, because the electoral realignment around the openness-demarcation dimension has already progressed further in Switzerland than in other contexts (Bornschiefer 2015; Kriesi et al. 2006), where the political left may still be more divided on this issue. Among right-wing voters, especially the electorate of the SVP includes a sizeable share of voters who support both economic integration and immigration control (especially among its more well-off voters). However, these voters predominantly follow the recommendations of their preferred party and very clearly tend to choose immigration control over economic integration. Because we find little evidence that objective economic vulnerabilities matter, economic-protectionist measures alongside integration seem unlikely to affect the choice of SVP voters in either direction. This leaves the voters of the moderately right-wing parties FDP and CVP as the least predictable group of voters when cross-pressured. On them, campaign efforts might have a strong impact.

How do our findings speak to political dynamics in other countries, where the trade-off between European integration and national sovereignty has also become an increasingly salient issue? While we do not have comparable data for other countries, there are indications that politics is shaped by similar scenarios. For example, in an online poll two weeks ahead of the Brexit referendum, 28% of British respondents stated that they did not think this trade-off existed. A whopping 51% of Leavers and 10% of Remainers believed that it was likely or very likely that the UK would have more sovereignty post-Brexit, and (very) unlikely that it would lose full access to the EU’s single market (Owen and Walter 2017). Likewise, 58% of Greek voters believed at the eve of the 2015 Greek bailout referendum that it would be possible to regain more policy autonomy without giving up the benefits of the single currency (Walter et al. 2018).

Like in Switzerland, it only became more apparent *after* the referendums that the price for the benefits of EU- or Eurozone-membership is most likely a loss in national policy autonomy. Whereas the Greeks overwhelmingly supported their government’s recommendation to choose international cooperation (continued Eurozone membership) at the expense of national autonomy, the conservative British government continues to enjoy quite broad support for leaving the EU, even if this entails a loss of the existing benefits of EU integration. Other governments, such as the Trump administration in the US, the populist M5S/Lega-government in Italy or the Polish PiS-government are still attempting to secure the benefits of international cooperation while extending national autonomy. Our analysis suggests that at least parts of their electorate are likely to emerge as cross-pressured voters, and a key question will be how they rank their policy goals when the trade-off begins to bite. What exactly makes voters cross-pressured in other countries, how they decide when confronted with the trade-off between international cooperation and

national sovereignty and how this influences partisan politics and government policymaking are thus important questions for future research.

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## Supporting Information

Additional Supporting Information may be found in the online version of this article:

**Figure A1:** Left-Right Self-Placement as a Determinant of Attitudes on Immigration and the Bilateral Treaties

**Table A1:** Determinants of Determinant of Attitudes on Immigration and the Bilateral Treaties (Multinomial Regression Results for Figures 2 and 5)

**Table A2:** Determinants of Attitudes on Immigration and the Bilateral Treaties Including Partisanship (Multinomial Regression Results)

**Table A3:** Determinants of Attitudes on Immigration and the Bilateral Treaties Including Partisanship with a Focus on the Interaction between Partisanship and Income (Multinomial Regression Results for Figure 4)

**Table A4:** Determinants of Choice: Probability that Cross-Pressured and Neutral Respondents Prefer Maintaining the Bilateral Treaties to Limiting Immigration (Ordered Logistic Regression Results for Figure 6)

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