

Book Reviews

Switzerland-EU Relations. Lessons for the UK after Brexit?

Paolo Dardanelli and Oscar Mazzoleni (eds.)

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Relations between Switzerland and the European Union (EU) are at a turning point. Seven year long negotiations to institutionalize the country's unique model of "integration without membership" through an institutional framework agreement (IFA) failed in May 2021, when the Swiss government unilaterally decided to pull out of these negotiations. Although the government has emphasized its desire to maintain the status quo and continue its bilateral approach in engaging with the EU, it is far from certain that the EU will accommodate Swiss preferences. Rather, the EU has emphasized that it will no longer update any existing and not conclude any bilateral agreements with Switzerland until an institutional agreement is signed. The EU's decision not to update regulations for Swiss medtech products and to relegate Switzerland to third-country status in Horizon Europe suggests that the risk of an erosion of the bilateral treaties is real and that the path ahead in Swiss-EU relations will be rocky.

At this uncertain moment, the book on "Switzerland-EU relations" edited by Paolo Dardanelli and Oscar Mazzoleni offers an excellent opportunity to take stock of the state of Swiss-EU relations. It surveys the historical developments over the past three decades and how these developments and Switzerland-EU relations more generally have affected the Swiss economy, society, and institutions. As such, it thus provides an encompassing overview over Swiss-EU relations. The book first provides an overview of the historical, economic, social, political, and institutional context within which Switzerland's European policy has been formulated over the last 30 years (ch. 2-6). Chapters 2 (by Georg Kreis) and 4 (by René Schwok) provide detailed overviews about the 1992 "No" to EEA membership, EU-related referenda, and the history of the bilateral treaties, including the recent IFA negotiations. These chapters show that Swiss discourse on being a "special case [Sonderfall]" and the preference for economic, but not political integration have been constant features of Swiss-EU politics. Moreover, some of the "aggravating circumstances" that led to EEA rejection seem eerily familiar to the circumstances that provoked the abandonment of the IFA: the dominating discourse on Swiss sovereignty, criticism of the role of European Court, clumsy maneuvering on part of the federal council, a cautious approach of the Swiss establishment, and a highly emotional debate. René Schwok's chapter also underscores that contrary to dominant Swiss narratives, the EU has made considerable concessions in the IFA negotiations. A second set of chapters focuses on the economic (ch. 3, by Sergio Rossi and Guillaume Vallet), societal, especially immigration-related (ch. 5, by Sabine Jenni) and institutional, especially federalism-related

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(ch. 6, by Paolo Dardanelli) consequences of Switzerland's close integration with the EU. The chapters not only highlight the structural needs for Switzerland to maintain close relations with the EU, but also the structural reasons for continued differentiation and the cost-benefit-trade-offs of Switzerland's close cooperation with the EU on Swiss policies and politics.

The second part then delves more deeply into the political aspects and consequences of Switzerland-EU relations by examining how these have mattered for party strategies (ch. 7, by Blaise Fontanellaz and Paolo Dardanelli), citizens' attitudes and voting behavior (ch. 8, by Pascal Sciarini; ch. 9, by Sean Mueller), and the role that minority/majority complexes (ch. 10, by Theiler) and region-specific effects (ch. 11, by Oscar Mazzoleni) play in shaping these dynamics. These chapters show a high level of continuity in patterns of support and opposition to close Swiss-EU cooperation. Yet, they also emphasize how a change in context conditions can lead to broad ranging adjustments in how citizens and parties assess this cooperation.

Based on this broad-based assessment of the state of Switzerland-EU and the Swiss experience of dealing with the EU, the book also discusses whether the Swiss experience holds lessons for the challenges facing the UK as it is navigating relations with the EU of post-Brexit. Most chapters touch on this question, but chapter 12 (by Clive Church) is fully devoted to this question. It argues that the British are largely unwilling to be inspired by Switzerland, especially as the UK seeks its own "custom-made" relationship with the EU. Chapter 13 (by Paolo Dardanelli and Oscar Mazzoleni) concludes and reiterates the overarching importance of the fundamental trade-off between the (primarily economic) gains from integration and the (primarily political) costs of supranational decision-making in terms of national autonomy for understanding Swiss-EU relations.

Overall, the book presents a comprehensive and useful analysis of the state of Swiss-EU relations and the implications of the Swiss experience for the UK. The chapters provide a nice mix of descriptive and analytic chapters, even if some chapters could have engaged more substantially with each other. Moreover, the contributions paint a nuanced picture of the state of Swiss-EU relations: Several chapters highlight the significant Europeanization of Swiss legislation and the pressure and problems this generates. Yet several chapters also underline why and how the status quo is so favorable for Switzerland. The flipside of this is that the EU has evaluated the arrangement as increasingly unfavorably over time, which goes a long way towards explaining why the status quo has turned more tenuous in recent years.


In light of these strengths, however, there are three areas in which the volume could have pushed further to provide even broader insights. First, although some chapters (e.g. chapters 5, 7, 8 and 11) review existing research, most chapters would have benefitted from engaging more strongly with the growing body of research on Swiss-EU relations. This includes research on Swiss-EU-related public opinion and voting behavior (e.g., Emmenegger et al. 2018; Lutz 2020; Milic 2015; Strijbis and Polavieja 2018), the role of referendums for Swiss-EU relations (Heidbreder et al. 2019), the Europeanization of Swiss politics (e.g. Jenni 2015) or Swiss responses to an increasingly unaccommodating EU stance (e.g. Armingeon and Lutz 2019; Schimmelfennig 2019). Tying the chapters' insights to the broader literature on differentiated (dis)integration (Gänzle et al. 2019; Leuffen et al. 2013) might also have been fruitful.

Second, the book takes a strongly Swiss-centric perspective with a focus on how Swiss concerns, the Swiss economic and institutional context, and Swiss politics generally shape Swiss-EU relations. More attention to the generalizability of the Swiss case might have

made the volume more appealing for a broader audience and would have allowed to compare the Swiss experience with similar experiences elsewhere. For example, in chapter 7 Blaise Fontanellaz and Paolo Dardanelli argue that centrist parties have struggled with positioning themselves on the EU issue – a look to other European countries would have shown that this predicament is shared by centrist parties in many European countries (De Vries and Hobolt 2020). Of course, the book opens up the Swiss-centrist perspective by exploring in depth how the Swiss case can and does inform post-Brexit UK-EU relations. Yet, rather than giving the UK an opportunity to learn from the Swiss experience, Brexit arguably exerts an even stronger effect on Swiss-EU relations as it affects both the EU's willingness to accommodate Swiss demands and Swiss voters' attitudes and vote-intentions in EU-related referendums (Malet and Walter 2021; Walter 2021). Not considering these feedback effects is a lost opportunity. Most importantly still, the volume pays surprisingly little attention to the other side of Swiss-EU relations: the EU. Although some chapters (e.g. chapters 2, 4, 10 and 12) briefly mention the EU's perspective, no chapter engages with it in an in-depth manner. This is a pity because the future evolution of Swiss-EU relations will depend to a large degree on the extent to which the EU will be willing to accommodate Switzerland going forward.

This is related to the third and final point: While the volume does a great job at explaining how Swiss-EU relations have developed, it is rather thin on how Swiss-EU relations are likely to evolve going forward. Of course, commenting on current events always bears the risk of being outdated rather quickly. Still, more attention to the broader questions and trade-offs facing Switzerland going forward, such as the implications of an erosion of the bilateral treaties, would have been useful. In particular, Switzerland and the EU must decide whether they accept a closer, more institutionalized relationship, or rather risk a gradual Swiss disintegration from Europe. How Switzerland, the EU, and the various actors involved weight the costs and benefits of this decision will shape Swiss-EU relations for years to come.

Despite these criticisms, however, the book will prove an excellent starting point for any scholar looking to understand the complex and multidimensional relations between Switzerland and the EU.

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Governing through Expertise. The Politics of Bioethics.

Annabelle Littoz-Monnet

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A common view has it that while questions of fact are often left to experts, value questions are the preserve of democratic politics. In *Governing through Expertise: The Politics of Bioethics*, Annabelle Littoz-Monnet shows that this is not always the case. “[E]ven when questions of ‘right’ or ‘wrong’ have been central in political debates,” she argues, “we can observe the ubiquitous role of experts” (p. 2). Her book traces the fascinating rise of a new class of experts in national and international governance, namely ‘ethics experts’ or ‘bioethics experts’. In the last half-century, numerous countries and international organizations have established ethics advisory bodies, including national councils on medical ethics and the EU’s European Group on Ethics (EGE). These bodies are called upon to examine thorny ethical questions arising from stem-cell research, nanotechnology, artificial intelligence or, most recently, the distribution of vaccines. Ethics experts – who may hail from the life sciences, philosophy, law or even theology – have come to assert authority over these policy issues based on their special training and knowledge about moral questions and claim to represent a diversity of viewpoints. Yet, Littoz-Monnet makes the case that rather than contributing to more ethically informed or democratic policy-making, the reliance on ethics experts for advice has served as a convenient way for policy-makers to defuse political conflict, sideline dissenting voices and push through pro-science and innovation policies.

The book is targeted at scholars with an interest in the role of expertise in public policy-making in general, and within European and international governance in particular. It will also be of interest to practitioners in the field. The book’s argument is located within the burgeoning literature on the relationship between knowledge and politics. In existing work,