**Switzerland and the European Union – a love-hate story**

**Multifaceted attitudes and priorities regarding the relationship between Switzerland and the EU**

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European integration is a multifaceted issue that is at the core of contemporary politics in both member and non-member states of the EU. The «permissive consensus» towards an ever-increasing European unification (Lindberg and Scheingold 1970) has shifted to a «constraining dissensus» (Hooghe and Marks 2009). Public opinion on European integration has gained massively in importance since the times are over in which the process could be characterized as a top-down, elite-driven project. It is crucial to understand what drives citizens’ attitudes and priorities regarding the different aspects of European integration. Most past studies have investigated a general (dis-)approval of a country’s EU membership. Given the increasing complexity and dimensionality of issues concerning European integration, general attitudes towards EU membership do not adequately reflect contemporary integration issues. European integration is not a simple «yes» or «no» question anymore. There is hence a scientific need to disentangle patterns of support and opposition regarding policy-specific attitudes and to differentiate them more distinctly from a general «diffuse» stance on European integration.

As a non-member state with ongoing negotiations with the EU, a high frequency of direct-democratic decisions, and a dense economic interdependence with the European single market, Switzerland serves as a perfect example to break down the broader concept of European integration into various aspects and to study the multidimensionality and complexity of public opinion towards them. Citizens’ attitudes and preferences on European integration affairs do not evolve in a vacuum but are contingent on the political context. It is therefore important to shed light on the interplay between citizens, political elite actors and the media. In my PhD thesis, I mainly draw on data collected by the Swiss Election Study (Selects) and explains what citizens and political elites think of different European integration issues. To what extent do these groups overlap? Who has multidimensional attitudes? What could the future relationship between the EU and Switzerland look like if it is to gain majority support among citizens? My PhD thesis investigates the multidimensionality of attitudes towards European integration and pays special attention to a factor that has often been neglected in the literature: the national border and people’s perceptions thereof.