

# EUROSCEPTICISM IN A SWISS STYLE

*Elena. S. Karsanova\**

DOI 10.24833/2073-8420-2017-1-42-44-50

**Introduction.** This article is devoted to the analysis of the reasons for opposition towards European integration in Switzerland and to the complicated format of inter-relations between Switzerland and the European Union.

**Materials and methods.** The author undertakes the theoretical and empirical analysis of historical, political and legal literature, research of foreign and Russian scholars, theses, statistical documents that gave her an opportunity to formulate the hypothesis of the research and come to the results that are stated in this article.

**Results.** the author's basic hypothesis presupposes that economic, ideological, and value discrepancies between the Swiss Confederation and the EU Member States cannot explain the motives why the Swiss electorate rejects the idea of Swiss membership in the EU. The explanations that at first sight look "obvious" do not give us an adequate answer to the question "why does Switzerland reject the idea of its membership in the European Union?" The more substantive and scrupulous research is needed to define the arguments, which could explain the Swiss position, and give us the arguments that could disclose the causes of their choice but not the superficial coincidences. That is why it is necessary to more carefully scrutinize all rational and in addition emotional (irrational) reasons of Swiss electorate attitude to the idea of integration with the EU.

Contrary to the EU neighbors, which have no reason to be afraid of losing ethno-cultural attributes as a source of national consolidation the Swiss can't define themselves in common cultural terms, can't use the concept "ethnic nation" as a nation-state marker and the uniting idea. The threat to civil practices and institutions from unpredictable situations in the EU can potentially cause not only deprivation of political role of the multiethnic federation but even loss of national identity of Swisses.

**Discussions and conclusion.** Just only the Swiss people have been able to turn federalism and democracy from abstract functionalist paradigms into real and cordial national values. That is why a deprivation of these values for them is equal to a loss of national identity. In this regards the author connects the nature of Swiss euroscepticism first of all with the threat to weaken the worldwide known Swiss institutions of neutrality, "referendum democracy", federalism that in practice turns into a rejection of any forms of international integration.

## Introduction

From all European countries, Switzerland embodies the best role model for what the European Union intends to be in practice: multicultural, stable, democratic international community. But despite interest in Switzerland from the EU Member States the most part of the

Swiss people resolutely reject any international forms of integration and even the very idea of joining the EU.

Being outside the European Union Switzerland is a rare example of the country, which meets all Maastricht criteria. Pursues independent migration policy, having state debt only 34% of GDP [24], (German has 71,7%, France -

\* **Elena. S. Karsanova**, Doctor of Political Science, Professor with the Department of State, Municipal Governance and Social Processes, Odintsovo branch of MGIMO University, Russia, Odintsovo (Moscow region)

98,2%, the EU - 86,8%) and annual per capita income 83 600 US dollars [23] (the third place in the world after Luxemburg and Qatar), Switzerland is striving to have independent national state system. If Norway, Island, and Lichtenstein made up their mind to join Eurozone than Switzerland has preferred the more complex format of partnership with Brussels through bilateral sectorial agreements though this way gradually loses its efficiency.

### Research

Realizing foreign policy, the Swiss government has to run the constant search for balance between the political and legal independence of its institutions (the most important of them is "a referendum democracy") and an objective necessity to connect national legislation with the EU. Governing a small country poor in natural resources, dependent on international trade and having no seashore Swiss authorities are pressed to find new formats of their relation with Brussels and to do it in such a way that, on one hand, this policy would not lead country to isolation, and on the other hand, should take into account the will of Swiss electorate.

At first sight, the Swiss rejection of membership in the EU seems puzzling, even taking into account that counteractions to the European integration in other parts of Western Europe are correlated with the same mood of the Swiss electorate. This is related, for example, to economic explanations. Though some sectors of the Swiss economy (for example, agriculture), most likely, will suffer if the country joins the EU, nevertheless almost all economists believe that as a result, Switzerland will get economic benefit from closer integration with other European countries. In any case, external demand for goods, which export quota, is about 45%, (most of which are from the EU countries) is a substantial indicator of national economic growth. [16. P. 760]. At the same time the general economic situation of Switzerland doesn't differ significantly from economic situation of other small, rich and depended on trade Western European countries, that consider membership in the EU economically profitable for themselves.

Contrary to the reasoning about pluses of the European integration, the reality prompts to Swiss people that, remaining beyond the borders of the EU where the financial policy is defined by Berlin and Brussels, membership in the EU will do not only economic harm for the country, but also could potentially threaten their own cultural identity. The number of

Swisses, who support European integration in comparison with a poll of 2015, has decreased by five percent (16%) [20].

The hostility of the Swiss electorate to the very idea of the EU accession isn't a reflection of the prevailing opinion of the national elite. The most part it indeed supports membership in the EU. So three of four party coalitions, which have been in power after World War II, have approved (with different degree of enthusiasm) Switzerland membership in the EU. Only the fourth the center-right Swiss People's Party has a prevailing number of Eurosceptics. Mass media in Switzerland also mostly support membership in the EU as most numbers of public leaders in labor unions, federations of employers do and so forth. It is masses of ordinary citizens, but not elite keep Switzerland to stand aside from the EU. In this sense, it is reasonable to ask, what keeps the Swiss electorate out of integration with the European Union?

Most likely, the explanations that focus attention only on economic factors or on cultural and ideological divergences between Switzerland and its European neighbors are unconvincing. The EU countries have demographic, social and economic characteristics, approximately similar with the Swiss Confederation, and they vary from falling figures of birth rate and attendance of churches to the increasing figures of foreign travel and demand for higher education [4]. The results of numerous research and referenda regularly confirm that public opinion on many social problems, in general, is the same as Western European countries have (from the rights of children and attitude to abortions to the questions of same-sex marriage). It means, that Swisses socially, culturally and demographically does not cordially differ from the European neighbors. That is why it is difficult to give the convincing explanation for their unwillingness to integrate with the EU.

### The results of the research

We can suppose that the commitment of the Swiss electorate to political institutions of Switzerland (federalism, a neutrality, and direct democracy) and at the same time their fear that membership in the EU will weaken these institutions, in fact, is the most convincing explanation of the Swiss position toward European integration. The majority of Eurosceptics insist that membership in the EU will be incompatible with political traditions of Switzerland. A neutrality (supporters of a neutrality in Switzerland of 95%), [20] federalism and direct democracy are still basic national priorities.

The majority of the EU states historically came into being as mono-ethnic societies in which political, social and cultural interests came gradually to one integral entity. In theoretical models of the ideal state, each ethnic group should have its national state, and each state has an endogenous ethnic culture where, according to Ernest Gellner statement, social, political and cultural borders are congruent and strengthen each other [8]. Of course, in practice most states in Europe and beyond don't meet the requirements of the ideal national state. Nevertheless, as soon as relative compliance between the state and the nation, policy, and culture have appeared, it became the central element of national identifications. In ethno-psychological terminology, it means that culture became a marker of a social identity. Political elite could rely now on culture in order to define and symbolize national borders and to turn the state into so-called cultural "container" which defines and protects national distinctness that we call "German", "French", "Italian" and so on. Citizens also feel the essence of national-state as an ethnically homogeneous entity inside and culturally differentiated from the outside. Just like the state defines the culture, the culture, in turn, defines the state, and both mutually strengthen each other. [3. Chapter 1].

Being a boundary marker a potential of national culture has important consequences for mono-ethnic (or relatively mono-ethnic) national states in their participation in the EU. In practice, it means that laws, institutions and political traditions of the state can be in some extent deformed or even partially included in the integration process, without threatening cultural originality of national state. Certainly, some political and economic borders can be wiped away, but only to that extent that does not affect negatively the state as the cultural unit. Such approach helps to understand why in Western Europe the growing economic and political interrelation between various ethnic cultures and even establishing Brussels as the EU political centre, weren't followed by parallel developments of the ethnopolitical sphere. Moreover, in the XXI century the national states, which are the members of the EU, not only continue to remain national cultural units and loci of ethnic identification but also are objects of growing attention in terms of protection of ethnonational peculiarities. Signs of that manifest themselves from the growth of nationalist and anti-immigrant parties in the many EU Member States to culturally sensitive spheres like languages, audiovisual subculture, and education.

Unlike most of the European neighbors, Switzerland isn't the national state. It has no only one language of international communication and no myths about common ethnic destiny. Therefore, Swisses can't define themselves in common ethnocultural terms, can't use the concepts "nation" and "culture" as a boundary marker and the uniting value. Instead of that the national concept of Swiss society is formed and designated by a number of institutional and civilization norms and traditions - first of all, it is a neutrality, federalism and "referendum" democracy [14. P. 68]. These values are supported with so-called "political mythology" about Switzerland as a peculiar state, which exploits two themes: first is that the central idea of Swiss mentality is the idea of "the will of the people", and second that Swiss historical heroes ensured safety and independence of the country. We can remark without exaggeration that respectable loyalty of Swiss electorate to their political institutions represents a basis on which the Swiss state is built. The numerous research of Swiss phenomenon confirm that the vast majority of Swisses, being asked: "What does it mean for you to be a Swiss?" answer that it means to be a citizen of the country that maintains neutrality [20].

The Swiss ethnopolitical pattern proves an Aristotelian formula about "a unity of unlike" [22. P. 97], and also the assumption of political theorists about "the constitutional patriotism" [5. P. 119]. Switzerland doesn't require common ethnocultural or language base [12. P. 239], because "stability of federation directly depends on nature of federal arrangements including the symbolical value of identification within particular borders" [13. P. 32-33].

In Switzerland, the concepts of "cultural nation" and "civic nation" represent the notions that relate to various forms of social practice and can't be accurately divided. From the dialectical point of view, notion "civic" to some extent is the same as "cultural" and vice versa. Switzerland has no usual national cultural attributes as its neighbors have - first of all, single national language.

### Conclusion

Such factors as "civic culture", or the most noticeable in the recent years, "the constitutional patriotism" characterizes the specific feature of a political situation in multiethnic Switzerland best of all [15. P. 583-584]. In practice, it means that the position of Confederation in relation to the process of integration with the EU can be explained by specific fear of vulnerability, which

distinguishes Switzerland from more or less monocultural the EU Member States. The former cannot be afraid of actual or potential possibility of their political institutions weakening if they have no risk to lose their ethnocultural attributes as a source of internal consolidation and external national specificity. Swisses, on the contrary, can't make it, because in Switzerland there is a lack of common ethnocultural attributes that fastening national unity.

It is possible theoretically to simulate mentally such kind of situation in which Swisses could recede from their so esteemed public and political institutions (a neutrality, federalism and "referendum democracy") and "to incline" on the "spirit of ethnic communities" or regional cultures. However, Swisses understand that such thing will weaken rather than strengthen their state in general. In that case, there will be the threat to civil practice and institutional cornerstones, which put into question the very concept of sustainable development of multiethnic Switzerland. If to transform crucially (in the thought experiment) institutional basis of such European states as France, Germany, Italy, for example, then their ethnocultural essence will remain the same. Switzerland at the similar situation will not only lose its political reputation of the successful multiethnic federation but probably it would be quite likely for it to lose national identity and consequence of that might be an emergence of interethnic contradictions and conflicts which many multiethnic states encountered in the past. That is a core distinction between Switzerland and most of its "euro-focused" neighbors.

Could Switzerland being a member of the EU provide for itself a special type of excep-

tions and at the same time keep essential national autonomy? Having obvious advantages, Swiss experience of trade, economic and political interaction with the European Union and participation in Schengen cooperation, nevertheless gives rather negative than the positive answer [2]. Despite Berne persistence to advocate its interests in front of Brussels, the pressure upon the country rises, and the number of controversial political and economic problems become more serious in Switzerland relationship with the EU. Today Brussels more persistently addresses to Confederation its demand to take into account basic principles of the EU, one of which is the freedom of movement of the foreign labor force. Moreover, in pursuance of the Schengen agreements, the Confederation is obliged to include all the juridical norms accepted by the European Union in its domestic law. Brussels is ready to sacrifice all bilateral arrangements with Switzerland if Berne will refuse to incorporate all precepts of the EU legal system in the legislation of Confederation.

Thus, accession to the EU, on the one hand, means for Switzerland a reduction of such its historical achievements as "referendum democracy" and "neutrality", simultaneously with sharing by Swisses all the EU problems. On the other hand for EU the results of this might be the growth of competition and rivalry within its framework. That is why we suppose that Brussels' attempt to incline Swiss electorate towards European integration, motivating him with the idealistic hope to reproduce Swiss domestic model of political unification upward within the framework of the EU, can be qualified as counterproductive.

### References:

1. Alekseeva, T.A., Lebedeva M.M. Chto proishodit s teoriej mezhdunarodnyh otnoshenij [What happens to the theory of international relations?]/Polis. Politicheskie issledovanija [Polis. Political researches]. 2016. № 1.
2. Babynina, N. Evropejskij Sojuz i Shvejcarija: raznonapravlennye vektory sotrudnichestva [European Union and Switzerland: multidirectional vectors of cooperation]. URL: <http://www.sov-europe.ru>.
3. Brubejker, R. Nacionalizm izmenilsya: nacional'nost' i nacional'nyj vopros v Novoj Evrope. Glava 1. [Nationalism Reframed: Nationhood and the National Question in the New Europe, Chapter 1]. URL: <https://is.muni.cz>.
4. Bundesamt für Statistik 2016. Die Schweiz und Europa. [Federal Office for statistics in 2016. Switzerland and Europe]. URL: [www.statistik.admin.ch](http://www.statistik.admin.ch).
5. Council conclusions on a homogeneous extended single market and EU relations with Non-EU Western European countries. Brussels, 16 December 2014. URL: <http://www.consilium.europa.eu>.
6. European Commission. Trade. Switzerland. URL: <http://ec.europa.eu>.
7. Farukshin, M.H. Problema jetnicheskogo golosovanija v zarubezhnom diskurse [The problem of ethnical voting in foreign discourse]/Sociologicheskie issledovanija [Sociological Researches]. 2016, № 5.
8. Gellner, E. Nacii i nacionalizm [Gellner E. Nations and nationalism.]. URL: <http://www.e-reading.club>.

9. Germann Micha, Serdült Uwe. Internet voting and turnout: Evidence from Switzerland//Electoral Studies, Volume 47, June 2017.
10. Habermas, Jü. Postnacional'naya konstellyaciya i budushchee demokratii [The Postnational Constellation. Political Essays] // Logos. 2003. No. 5 (39).
11. Huey Shy Chau, Pelzelmayer Katharina, Schwiter Karin. Short-term circular migration and gendered negotiation of the right to the city: The case of migrant live-in care workers in Basel, Switzerland//Cities, Available online 28 April 2017.
12. Karsanova, E.S. Ehtnopoliticheskie konflikty v mnogonacional'nyh gosudarstvah: komparativnyj analiz. Monografiya. [Ethno-political conflicts in the multinational states: comparative analysis. Monograph]. Odintsovo, 2010.
13. Karsanova, E.S. Ehtnopoliticheskie konflikty v poliehtnicheskikh federacijah: priroda i praktika resheniya v usloviyah globalizacii. Avtoreferat dissertacii na soiskanie uchenoj stepeni doktora politicheskikh nauk [Ethno-political conflicts in multiethnic federations: the nature and practice of the decision in the conditions of globalization. The abstract of the thesis for Ph.D. (Political Science)]. Moscow, 2012.
14. Karsanova, E.S. Shvejcarskij opyt gosudarstvennogo upravleniya i preduprezhdeniya ehtnolingvisticheskikh protivorechij [Swiss experience of public administration and prevention of ethnolinguistic contradictions]//Nauchnoe obozrenie. Gumanitarnie nauki [Scientific review. Humanities]. Ser. 2. No. 5, 2012.
15. Karsanova, H. Federalism as a factor of sustainable development of the multiethnic state//Mediterranean Journal of Social Sciences. Vol. 6, No 3. Supplement 2, May 2015. Rome, Italy 2015.
16. Petrov, I.E. Oчерки истории Швейцарии [Sketches of History of Switzerland]. Yekaterinburg, 2006.
17. Ritzel Christian, Kohler Andreas. Protectionism, how stupid is this? The causal effect of free trade for the world's poorest countries: Evidence from a quasi-experiment in Switzerland//Journal of Policy Modeling, Available online 17 May 2017.
18. Ruzza, Carlo. Populism and euroscepticism: Towards uncivil society?// Policy and Society. Volume 28, Issue 1, April 2009.
19. Sokolovska, Zorana. Imagining Europe's linguistic diversity in the Council of Europe's Parliamentary Assembly// Language & Communication, Volume 51, November 2016.
20. «Sicherheit 2016»; «Sicherheit 2015»[«Security 2016»; «Securiry 2015»]. URL: <http://www.css.ethz.ch.>; <http://www.security-finder.ch>.
21. Statistique Suisse – Office fédéral de la statistique. URL: <http://www.bfs.admin.ch>.
22. Volgin, O.S. Grazhdanskoe obshchestvo: teoreticheskie zametki [Civil society: theoretical notes]. Tetradi mezhdunarodnogo universiteta v Moskve: Sbornik nauchnyh trudov «Grazhdanskoe obshchestvo v Rossii: nadezhdy i real'nost'» [Notebooks of the International University in Moscow: The Collection of scientific works "Civil society in Russia: hopes and reality"]. Moscow, 2005. Release No. 5.
23. <http://data.trendeconomy.ru>.
24. <http://www.ereport.ru>.

## ЕВРОСКЕПТИЦИЗМ ПО-ШВЕЙЦАРСКИ

**Введение.** Статья посвящена анализу причин противодействия европейской интеграции, а также сложному формату взаимодействия Швейцарии с Европейским Союзом.

**Материалы и методы.** В статье предпринят теоретический и эмпирический анализ исторической и политико-правовой литературы, тематических исследований зарубежных и отечественных ученых, диссертаций, статистических источников, социологических исследований, что позволило сформулировать гипотезу и получить следующие результаты.

**Результаты исследования.** Исходная гипотеза сводилась к предположению, что исключительно экономические, идеологические, ценностные расхождения и факторы между Конфедерацией и ее европейскими соседями не объясняют неприятие швей-

царским электоратом членства в ЕС. На первый взгляд, кажущиеся «очевидными» объяснения не дают адекватного ответа на отказ Швейцарии от членства в ЕС. Нужны более тонкие характеристики, выходящие за рамки статистической увязки данных отношений, указывающие на причинность, а не на их простое соотношение. Поэтому необходимо обратить внимание как на рациональные, так и на эмоциональные причины противодействия швейцарского электората интеграции в Европейский Союз. В отличие от своих евроориентированных соседей, у которых нет оснований опасаться утраты своих этнокультурных атрибутов как источника внутренней консолидации, швейцарцы не могут определить себя в общекультурных терминах, не могут использовать понятие «нация» в качестве пограничного

маркера и объединяющего начала. Угроза гражданским практикам и институциональным основам потенциально может привести страну не только к лишению политического амплуа успешной полиэтнической федерации, - велика вероятность утраты швейцарцами своей национальной идентичности.

**Обсуждения и заключения.** Именно швейцарцам удалось преобразовать федерализм и демократию из функциональных парадигм в общие и вместе с тем объединяющие ценности, утрата которых равнозначна потере национальной идентичности и свободы. Поэтому природу швейцарского

евроскептицизма автор, прежде всего, связывает с угрозой сокращения компетенции институтов нейтралитета, федерализма и «референдарной демократии», которая на практике конвертируется в неприятие швейцарцами любых форм наднациональных интеграции.

Карсанова Елена Созрикеевна,  
доктор политических наук, профессор  
кафедры государственного, муниципально-  
го управления и социальных процессов  
Одинцовского филиала  
МГИМО МИД России

**Ключевые слова:**

Швейцария, Европейский союз,  
евроинтеграция, политические институты,  
национальная идентификация,  
федерализм, нейтралитет, демократия.

**Keywords:**

Switzerland, European Council, European  
integration, political institutions, national  
identification, federalism, neutrality,  
referendum democracy.

**Литература:**

1. Алексеева Т.А., Лебедева М.М. Что происходит с теорией международных отношений. Полис. Политические исследования. 2016. № 1.
2. Бабынина Н. Европейский Союз и Швейцария: разнонаправленные векторы сотрудничества. URL: <http://www.sov-europe.ru>.
3. Брубейкер Р. Национализм изменился: национальность и национальный вопрос в Новой Европе. Глава 1. URL: <https://is.muni.cz>.
4. Bundesamt für Statistik 2016. Die Schweiz und Europa. [Federal Office for statistics in 2016. Switzerland and Europe]. URL: [www.statistik.admin.ch](http://www.statistik.admin.ch).
5. Council conclusions on a homogeneous extended single market and EU relations with Non-EU Western European countries. Brussels, 16 December 2014. URL: <http://www.consilium.europa.eu>.
6. European Commission. Trade. Switzerland. URL: <http://ec.europa.eu>.
7. Фарукшин М.Х. Проблема этнического голосования в зарубежном дискурсе// Социологические исследования. 2016. № 5.
8. Геллнер Э. Нации и национализм. URL: <http://www.e-reading.club>.
9. Germann Micha, Serdült Uwe. Internet voting and turnout: Evidence from Switzerland//Electoral Studies, Volume 47, June 2017.
10. Хабермас Ю. Постнациональная констелляция и будущее демократии// Логос. 2003. № 5 (39).
11. Huey Shy Chau, Pelzelmayr Katharina, Schwiter Karin. Short-term circular migration and gendered negotiation of the right to the city: The case of migrant live-in care workers in Basel, Switzerland//Cities, Available online 28 April 2017.
12. Карсанова Е.С. Этнополитические конфликты в многонациональных государствах: компаративный анализ. Монография. Одинцово, 2010.
13. Карсанова Е.С. Этнополитические конфликты в полиэтнических федерациях: природа и практика решения в условиях глобализации. Автореферат диссертации на соискание ученой степени доктора политических наук. Москва, 2012.
14. Карсанова Е.С. Швейцарский опыт государственного управления и предупреждения этнолингвистических противоречий// Научное обозрение. Гуманитарные науки. Сер. 2. № 5, 2012.
15. Karsanova H. Federalism as a factor of sustainable development of the multiethnic state// Mediterranean Journal of Social Sciences. Vol. 6, No 3. Supplement 2, May 2015. Rome, Italy 2015.
16. Петров И.Е. Очерки истории Швейцарии. Екатеринбург, 2006.
17. Ritzel Christian, Kohler Andreas. Protectionism, how stupid is this? The causal effect of free trade for the world's poorest countries: Evidence from a quasi-experiment in Switzerland//Journal of Policy Modeling, Available online 17 May 2017.
18. Ruzza, Carlo. Populism and euroscepticism: Towards uncivil society?// Policy and Society. Volume 28, Issue 1, April 2009.

19. Sokolovska, Zorana. Imagining Europe's linguistic diversity in the Council of Europe's Parliamentary Assembly// Language & Communication, Volume 51, November 2016.
20. Исследования: «Безопасность-2016»; «Безопасность-2015» («Sicherheit 2016»; «Sicherheit 2015»). URL: <http://www.css.ethz.ch>; <http://www.security-finder.ch>.
21. Statistique Suisse – Office fédéral de la statistique. URL: <http://www.bfs.admin.ch>.
22. Волгин О.С. Гражданское общество: теоретические заметки//Тетради международного университета в Москве. Сборник научных трудов «Гражданское общество в России: надежды и реальность». Выпуск № 5. Москва, 2005.
23. URL: <http://data.trendeconomy.ru>.
24. URL: <http://www.ereport.ru>.