

Abstract

In the past few years, there has been a growing popular backlash against international institutions. Much has been written about the reasons of why voters in countries have turned against international institutions. Much less is known about the receiving end of such processes: the international organization's remaining member states, who are also affected by a member state's withdrawal from the international organization (IO). Our paper examines how voters in these countries expect their governments to conduct the withdrawal negotiations. It argues that voters who support the IO face an accommodation dilemma: on the one hand, insisting that an exit from the IO means that the country can no longer enjoy the benefits of cooperation highlights the benefits of IO membership and reduces the risk of political contagion. At the same time, such a strategy is costly not just for the leaving state, but also for the remaining member states. Voters are therefore more accommodating on cooperation issues, in which a hard stance also creates costs for themselves, whereas they are likely to support a tougher stance on zero-sum issues. In contrast, those critical of the IO face a "non-accommodation dilemma" with regard to zero-sum issues, but are accommodating on cooperation issues. We examine our argument using a conjoint experiment about preferred Brexit packages among voters in Germany and Spain. Our results show that voters are well attuned to the dilemmas surrounding the Brexit negotiations. Europhiles take a much harder line with regard to the Brexit negotiations than euroskeptics, and are particularly uncompromising on zero-sum issues such as the Brexit bill.