

Why Switzerland?



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Switzerland is a special and fascinating place. Its unique institutions, its direct democracy, multi-member executives, absence of strikes, communal autonomy, its universal military service, its wealth, and four national languages make it interesting in itself. But it has wider significance, in representing the 'Europe that did not happen', the Europe that escaped the centralisation of state and economy associated with the modern world. Today, there is a new special feature. Switzerland is an island surrounded by the European Union, and resists membership. Why Switzerland? attempts to answer three related questions: why has such an exception to European norms survived? Why should outsiders notice its peculiarities and what can they learn from them? Finally, can so unusual a society continue to exist when many of the conditions in which it evolved have disappeared? Why Switzerland?, which was first published in 1976, has been completely revised (with new illustrations) to try to answer these questions for the present generation.

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