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## Why Switzerland?

Revised and completely updated edition of Jonathan Steinberg's classic account of Switzerland's unique political and economic system. *Why Switzerland?* examines the complicated voting system that allows citizens to add, strike out or vote more than once for candidates, with extremely complicated systems of proportional representation; a collective and consensual executive leadership in both state and church; and the creation of the Swiss idea of citizenship, with tolerance of differences of language and religion, and a perfectionist bureaucracy which regulates the well-ordered society. This third edition tries to test the flexibility of the Swiss way of politics in the globalised world, social media, the huge expansion of money in world circulation and the vast tsunamis of capital which threaten to swamp it. Can the complex machinery that has maintained Swiss institutions for centuries survive globalisation, neo-liberalism and mass migration from poor countries to rich ones?

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# Why Switzerland?

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*Third Edition*

**Jonathan Steinberg**

*University of Pennsylvania*



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*To Marion Kant  
My partner in this work and in life*

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Da Lugano si sale tra i vignette, tra i giardini, tra le ville eleganti; le Alpi sono vicine ma la dolce Italia vive ancora e prima di morire brilla nel lago, nel cielo, nei colli. E una patetica chiusa di uno splendido poema. Ma qualcosa è filtrata d'Oltrealpe: la lindura delle casine, delle *crotti* non è italiana.

*Antonio Fogazzaro*

Überhaupt ist nicht gross oder klein, was auf der Landkarte so scheint: es kommt auf den Geist an.

*Johannes von Müller*

Trois Suisses vont à la chasse aux escargots et ils comparent leurs prises en fin de journée. – ‘Moi’, dit le Genevois rapide, ‘j’en ai cent.’ – ‘Moi’, dit le Bernois, ‘j’en ai attrapé quatre.’ – ‘Et moi’, dit le Vaudois (imaginez l’accent), ‘j’en ai bien vu un, mais il m’a échappé.’

*Denis de Rougemont*

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## Preface to the third edition

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That this book which first appeared in 1976 should still be in print delights but also challenges the author. Both the book and its author have grown much older and the world in which the 1995 edition appeared has changed beyond recognition. A small example will tell it all. In 1995 for the paragraph on strikes on page 2 of Chapter 1, I consulted a hard-cover volume of the *Statistisches Handbuch der Schweiz* in the reference section of the University Library in Cambridge; it and countless other sources are now on line. The internet, globalisation, the ubiquitous smart phone, the huge explosion of wealth and the gap between rich and poor, the crises of the European Union, the problems of migrant labour and the emergence of religious fundamentalisms and terrorism, the relative decline of the United States and the emergence of the People's Republic of China as a world power have changed the environment in which a small, very special state, called Switzerland, now has to operate.

Much of what now goes on in our world cannot be observed by a single academic with an access to the internet, indeed, often not by the authorities of the great states themselves. Nobody knows, as I write, how the Federal Reserve Bank in the United States will dispose of the billions of securities it bought during the crises after 2008, and the same uncertainty afflicts the European Central Bank and the Bank of England. The Swiss National Bank has also had to act to counter currency swings as literally billions of dollars in foreign currency flow around the world at the click of a mouse.

As a result this third edition of *Why Switzerland?* makes more modest claims than its predecessors and will offer a much less comprehensive explanation of what is going on in Switzerland today. Its basic objective is to bring the data, where possible, up to date and see how much of the Swiss model, which I observed in the 1970s and 1990s still holds. If I can do that with some accuracy, I shall be more than satisfied.

I have added a new chapter called 'Why Italian Switzerland?' to answer the question how and why Italian Switzerland stayed Swiss when the border to the South separates two very similar Lombard communities.

There is a new chapter on the European Union, its operations and its impact on Switzerland, and a section in the final chapter on 'Identity, on the new immigrants and the Swiss relationship to the Moslem world. In effect, the new book asks a question which was self-evident but no longer is: how much of Swiss uniqueness, its peculiarity and idiosyncracies, still exists? And how have such changes affected its sense of itself: the identity question to which I devote the final chapter.

In order to be reasonably certain that I got the present picture more or less right, I have been to Switzerland to interview people in very different walks of life and was the guest of the Swiss think-tank, *L'Avenir Suisse* in Zürich, where I tried out some of my ideas before a formidable and distinguished audience. I want to thank Dr Gerhard Schwarz and Herr Andreas Müller for the warmth of their welcome and for the unique opportunity to meet such a distinguished and critical public. Mr Andrew Holland, director of the Pro Helvetia Stiftung, the most important cultural institution in the country, contacted over a dozen people who kindly gave me their time, and Herr Andreas Langenbacher helped with acquisition of important sources. President Gregory Warden of Franklin University Switzerland in Lugano, offered me lodging and entertainment during a weekend in Italian Switzerland. I am grateful to Dr Martin Meyer, President of the Schweizerisches Institut für Auslandsforschung, and my old friend Heinrich Christen, member of the Board, for the invitation to give a public lecture at Zurich University. Several of my conversation partners were already friends or have become friends recently and if I list them alphabetically, I hope they will read between the lines to know how much I value their time and insights:

Douglas Ansell, Professor (ex-state secretary) Dr Michael Ambühl, Professor Urs Altermatt, Lucas Bärffuss, Christoph Büchi, Professor Iso Camartin, Heinrich Christen, Hanneke Frese, Dr Roger Köppel, editor of *Die Weltwoche*, Professor Gerhard Kohler, Professor Georg Kreis, Consigliere degli Stati Filippo Lombardi, Professor Peter von Matt, Dr Martin Meyer, President of the Schweizerisches Institut für Auslandsforschung, Father Toni Meier, Signor Claudio Mesoniat, Dr Nenad Stojanovic, Dr Roman Studer, Ambassador Benedikt Wechsler and Dr Favio Zanetti, who is my oldest friend in Italian Switzerland and Dr Thomas Zaugg. I owe special thanks to Ambassador Roberto Barzaletti, Swiss Ambassador to the European Union, for the fascinating tutorial in EU-Swiss relations, and Susan Downhill and Tim King for their hospitality in Brussels, their friendship over many years and for their instruction in European Union affairs. I have to thank Dr Paolo Luca Bernardini of the Università del' Insubria in Como for his interest in

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Preface to the third edition

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translating this text into Italian. Others in Pro Helvetia and l'Avenir Suisse helped me with practical arrangements and hotel bookings. I thank them all; this is very much their book too.

Michael Watson, my editor at Cambridge University Press, waited patiently for much too long for me to deliver the book I had promised and Rosalyn Scott at CUP helped me through the new marketing procedures, illustrations and jacket design. Sri Hari Kumar Sugumaran of Integra PDY, guided me through the electronic proof-reading and indexing with patience and sympathy. I am very grateful to them and to the others at Cambridge University Press who make books possible, even in the digital age.