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Switzerland - European Union

An Impossible Membership?



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This study explains in an accessible manner the key elements of the relationship between the Swiss Confederation and the European Union. The author begins by summarizing the main steps in this special and evolving relationship which has long oscillated between membership and marginalization.

He also guides us expertly through the thickets of referendums (no fewer than fourteen from 1972 to the time of writing!) in which Swiss citizens have been given the opportunity to pass judgment on the European question.

Finally and perhaps most importantly, this volume explains why the Swiss still oppose joining the European Union. It examines the thorny questions of identity, reservations on policy matters (preserving neutrality, direct democracy and Swiss style federalism), not to mention doubts regarding the economy, which have done so much to shape public opinion and the official strategy of the Swiss Confederation.

Paradoxically, the closer Switzerland gets to the EU through bilateral agreements, the more distant prospects of joining the EU seem to become. This is the conundrum at the heart of the relationship between the Swiss Confederation and the European Union which is expertly explored in this volume.

Contents: The First Four Decades - The European Economic Area (EEA) - The First Bilateral Agreements - The Bilateral Agreements II - Pursuing a Bilateral Path - Accession to the EEA - Accession to the EU - Why Switzerland Refused to Join the European Union - Conclusions: Interesting Paradoxes.

The Author: René Schwok occupies the Jean Monnet Chair in Political Science at the European Institute and at the Department of Political Science of the University of Geneva. He is also Director of the Masters Programme of Advanced Studies in International and European Security, jointly with the Geneva Center for Security Policy. Since 2008, René Schwok has been President of the European Community Studies Association (Switzerland). He has been Visiting Professor at the Diplomatic Academy of Malta, Hebrew University of Jerusalem, Université de Fribourg, Graduate Institute of International Studies, Geneva, and Université catholique de Louvain.