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Uncertain Path: Democratic Transition and Consolidation in Slovenia

Rudolf Martin Rizman

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In this case study of the politics of transition in Eastern Europe, Rudolf Martin Rizman provides a careful, detailed sociological explanation and narrative on the emergence of independent statehood and democracy in Slovenia, a small state whose experience is of interest to policy makers, scholars, and serious students of Eastern Europe. In his focus on the transition from an authoritarian to a democratic regime, Rizman analyzes social processes and political issues in the context of the Third Wave of democratization, identifying “zones of certainty and uncertainty.”

Challenging many generally accepted ideas about small states and their transitions to democracy, this book places Slovenia’s pattern of democratization in the wider regional context of eastern and central European post-communist transitions. Rizman shows, for example, that a country’s size is merely one factor out of many, and while Slovenes considered the influence of larger states, their choices were not particularly circumscribed by them.

Opening with a discussion of the relevant theoretical environment in sociology and political science, Rizman illuminates the complex processes of democratic transition and consolidation. From there, the book analyzes the internal and external processes and factors relevant for Slovenia’s successful trajectory from existence as an ethnically defined sub-nation to an internationally recognized nation-state.
After careful consideration of religious, political, military, intellectual, and other socio-political stakeholders in the region, including the somewhat disturbing evidence of the salience of a new “radical Right”, Rizman concludes that Slovenia is irreversibly set on the course of democratization, with indications of having reached the early stages of consolidation.

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