

Bergmann, Julian. 2020. *The European Union as International Mediator: Brokering Stability and Peace in the Neighborhood*. Palgrave Macmillan, 270 pp. \$89.99 (Hardcover)

Julian Bergmann's book is the first work that comparatively studies the effectiveness of the EU in international mediation. He decided to write the book in 2011 while working as a research fellow at the Department of Political Science at Johannes Gutenberg University in Mainz. With a background in peace and conflict studies, Bergmann decided to address the gap in the literature regarding the EU's involvement as a mediator in international and regional conflicts, especially from a mediation research perspective. A possible reason for this gap is because mediation as a conflict management instrument usually happens in secrecy, and credible information might not be available to the public. No wonder Bergmann had to spend several years in the field, gathering important information for the writing of the book.

In 2009, the EU implemented the Treaty of Lisbon, which reformed the EU's Foreign and Security Policy. The reforms led to the introduction of the Concept on Strengthening the EU's Mediation and Dialogue which increased the EU's capacity in conflict mediation, which led to the EU receiving the 2011 Nobel Peace Prize. This book cuts across three disciplines: peace studies, EU Foreign Policy, and mediation studies. The main question guiding Bergmann while carrying out his research was: How can the effectiveness of the EU in international mediation and its conditions be conceptualized and empirically investigated? The author sets up three key objectives for the book. The first objective is to come up with a conceptual framework that would study the EU's mediation effectiveness. Second, to apply the formulated conceptual framework to the case study of Montenegro's Independence, the Belgrade – Pristina dialogue, and the EU as a Co-mediator in the Geneva International Discussions (GID) on South Ossetia and Abkhazia. Third, to analyze and explain the different extent of EU's mediation results within and across the three cases, to position the findings in mediation and EU foreign policy research.

The author offers a convincing assessment of the under-studied area of the EU's Foreign and Security Policy related to mediation. The book is rich in details in the sense that the author first carries out an in-depth study of three individual cases concerning the EU's mediation efforts. He then compares the results to point out generalizable patterns to confirm and refute the conclusions made from the individual cases. The book marks a starting point for bridging the gap between foreign policy and mediation studies. Other

researchers can follow Bergmann's framework in Chapter 2 and apply it in their research of the mediation success of other actors in conflict resolutions. The framework measures mediation effectiveness as determined by conflict settlement and the mediator's goal attainment. Then six factors that impact mediation are used to assess the mediation effectiveness: mediators leverage, mediator's strategy, EU policy coherence, mediator's coordination, the conflict party's willingness to compromise, and the conflict party's internal cohesiveness (pp. 32–42). The framework is then assessed in three different cases to measure EU mediation effectiveness.

The first case study is the EU's mediation success of Montenegro's independence which happened in two phases: from November 2001 to March 2002 when the Belgrade Agreement was signed; and from April 2002 to May 2006 during the implementation of the Belgrade Agreement. The EU was able to resolve some of the main issues in the conflict and delay the referendum to a future date for a smooth transition. The author concludes that the EU was highly effective in terms of conflict settlement and goal attainment because of the high leverage it posed against the conflicting parties that made it easier to apply both formulation and manipulation strategies. Similarly, the EU member states, the mediator, and the EU institutions worked together, therefore the mediator's vertical and horizontal coherence ranged from high to medium, thus raising the conflicting parties' confidence in the process. In the end, Montenegro consented to postpone the referendum because it was assured of a future referendum with the possibility of international recognition of the results, even though the Serbian government still wished to retain constitutional relations with Montenegro.

The second case study is the EU's role in the mediation of the Belgrade – Pristina dialogue between March 2011 and June 2019. It was mainly Kosovo's unilateral declaration of independence (UDI) on February 17, 2008, and the opinion of the International Court of Justice in 2010 that presided over the mediation process. The author assesses the EU's degree of mediation effectiveness to be medium because some of the issues were not agreed on while some achieved agreements stalled in implementation.¹ The factors relating to the mediators' characteristics such as leverage, strategy, policy coherence take a high degree while those relating to the conflicting parties take a medium degree.²

The third case study is the EU's role as a co-mediator in the Geneva International Discussions (GID) on South Ossetia and Abkhazia. The conflicts related to South Ossetia and Abkhazia are ethnopolitical, with roots originating from the Soviet period. The mediation happened in four phases based on the terms of the EU's High Representatives in charge of the conflict resolution. In the end, the EU was ineffective in conflict settlement due to the

1 Medium effective in preventing re-escalation of the conflict, and while for the outcome goals, it was medium effective in improving the living conditions in Kosovo and the normalization of the relations between the conflicting parties.

2 These are conflicting parties' internal coherence and conflicting parties' willingness to compromise.

conflicting parties' unwillingness to compromise and relatively effective in achieving its mediation goal of keeping the parties in the process, but not in other objectives. The six conditions of the EU's mediation effectiveness deduce that the overall degree of the EU's mediation effectiveness is from low to medium. The EU has had leverage against Georgia but not against South Ossetia and Abkhazia, hindering the application of the manipulative strategy. The unwillingness of the conflicting parties to compromise made it hard for the EU to use incentives and manipulation of the parties to reach a zone of agreement.

The overall credibility of the book stems from the fact that Bergman possesses relevant academic experience in the area of research and has spent eight years and three months collecting the original materials relevant for writing the book. The process took a very long time, considering that the information related to mediation is only partially available to the public. Bergman used qualitative research techniques where the data were collected from three single cases using both original materials in the form of interview data, 79 semi-structured interviews using pre-defined questioners with sufficient flexibility to alter the order of the questions or raise additional issues and preexisting materials such as the official EU documents, documents from the conflicting parties, agreements, press, and secondary sources. The data collected were then analyzed using comparative case studies of three single cases, and then a comparison was made within-case evidence generated to establish a generalizable pattern to approve or disapprove the conclusions drawn from the individual case studies. To implement the comparative case study, he combines the congruence analysis and process tracing methods. The limitations arising from process tracing were mitigated by relying the empirical analysis on triangulation across multiple sources. The main empirical findings are well presented, compared and interpreted, and situated within the relevant field. The importance and the implications of the findings are identified and interpreted. Then several potential avenues for future research are identified as follows: EU's participation in multi-party mediation; the role of norms in EU's mediation practice; interaction between mediation and other EU's conflict management practices and the effectiveness of the EU in mediation compared to those of other actors like states, other regional organizations and non-state actors.

This book is important as the first-ever comparative analysis of the EU's role as a mediator in conflict settlement. It offers a compelling assessment of the EU's stabilizing role as part of the EU's foreign and security policy in the neighbourhood by focusing on the case study of Montenegro's independence, the Belgrade – Pristina dialogue, and EU's co-mediation role over the conflicts in South Ossetia and Abkhazia in the Geneva international discussions. The book further focuses on the importance of the EU as a mediator in a peaceful settlement of conflicts. It is of great significance for all analysts and practitioners interested in developing the foreign and security policy of the EU. Therefore, Bergmann's book provides a key resource for those in search of a better understanding of the important factors that shape the EU's mediation role in peace negotiations.

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