

Book Review

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THE HIGH REPRESENTATIVE AND EU FOREIGN POLICY INTEGRATION: A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF KOSOVO AND UKRAINE

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Abstract

This book offers an account of how the institutionalisation of the EU foreign and security policy has impacted processes of European integration. The manuscript proposes a 'synthetic' model through which it examines evidence of EU member states' preference ordering and interest aggregation by the High Representative in the context of EU-Kosovo and EU-Ukraine relations.

Keywords

European Union integration; Foreign policy; Security; Convergence; Strategic choice; Governance

The book's focal methodological critique lies in the inapposite nature of the prevalent supranational-intergovernmental dichotomy permeating the study of the EU's foreign and security policy. In its early chapters, it sets out to investigate how the institutionalisation of this policy arena by the Lisbon Treaty has increased the complexity of interest aggregation and ideational convergence amongst EU member states and the extent to which the High Representative (HR) has come to operate as an agenda-setter. After establishing this, the manuscript then turns to a comparative analysis of EU-Ukraine and EU-Kosovo relations within the parameters of the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP).

The recognition of the complexity of decision-making in the CFSP is certainly timely and appropriate. The Lisbon Treaty introduced a series of institutional and governance reforms to this policy area. These include the EU acquiring legal personality in relations with third countries and the creation of the HR to cohere common positions both horizontally and vertically, such as across EU institutions and between EU institutions and the member states. These reforms notwithstanding, the CFSP continues to operate essentially under rules of unanimity and as an area of no legislation (European

Parliament 2008). This specific *modus operandi* differs significantly from other policy areas of the EU, such as the internal market, and speaks to the conceptual nature of the EU as a system of differentiated integration (Schimmelfennig, Leuffen and Rittberger 2015). In this view, the CFSP is not an area of high integration, unlike the single market, which in turn, makes it highly politicised. In practical terms, this means that it is very difficult for the HR to articulate common positions given the divergent interests (and indeed, in some cases, Treaty opt-outs) of the member states, which continue to maintain controlled oversight.

It is against this backdrop that the author of this manuscript takes stock of a decade of the CFSP post-Lisbon in the context of two testing cases for the agenda-setting prowess of the HR – the long-standing relationship with Kosovo and the more recent but formative developments *vis-à-vis* Ukraine. Further, the author advances hypotheses about the HR approaches in the face of divergent member states' interest preference ordering. The analysis has two directions of impact: first, the book makes an effort to contribute to normative discussions by proposing an analytical model that is derived from a review of a range of theoretical perspectives; second, the manuscript presents a comparative analysis of empirical evidence from two significant crises in the immediate geographic vicinity of the EU, namely (1) the *insecurity* of state coherence in the case of Ukraine; and (2) the quandary over the status of Kosovo in the context of the widening of EU integration to the Western Balkans. Hereafter, this review looks at each of the directions of impact of the book in turn.

The manuscript offers an appraisal of dominant and middle-range theoretical frameworks in EU studies arguing for the emergence of a synthesised 'analytically eclectic model' arrived at through a strategic choice approach. The resulting amalgam appears to rest heavily on tweaked inputs from institutionalism (institutions conceived as unitary actors), rational choice (EU member states behaving as utility-maximisers) and new intergovernmentalism (preferences are fixed but can change through strategic interaction). The maze of the theoretical complexity is organised through several hypotheses, the first of which is most impactful, namely: 'The current EU foreign and security policy institutional framework results from the interaction between the decrease of the mechanisms of organizational abandonment in the face of unsatisfactory outcomes and the creation of mechanisms of intra-organizational correction and recuperation'. Closely aligned with Weiler, this hypothesis tests the EU member states' ideational convergence, as evidenced in their approach to the cases of Kosovo and Ukraine. The ensuing analysis establishes that the mechanisms of correction and recuperation have resulted in significant leeway for EU member states over regional policies. The remaining hypotheses centre on what seems to be a more closely anticipated role of the HR as agenda-setter, functionally resulting from the direction of the impact of reforms in this policy arena as introduced by the Lisbon Treaty. With this, the book turns to the case studies proper of EU-Kosovo and EU-Ukraine relations.

The time-line of the case study investigation is kept broadly uniform by selecting the London Treaty (1913) as the departing point for the case of Kosovo and the end of the First World War (1918) for Ukraine. The arising reductionist problematic of statehood claims is ameliorated by the fact that the volume is not concerned with interest aggregation by third countries in the EU foreign and security policy arena. Indeed, with that caveat, the timeline of the case justification is rendered practically immaterial to the objectives of the volume as stated here. What is of interest are goals pursued in lieu of the 'carrot' of enlargement since there was a lack of EU member state ideational convergence and preference alignment with a view to the latter. The volume notes that exogenous factors over time caused preference convergence towards stabilisation (Kosovo) and economic integration (Ukraine) instead. Thus, this book opens an interesting discussion as to whether the tools of stabilisation and economic integration respectively can serve as stepping stones towards widening goals. In this sense, it would be critical to see whether future developments in EU-Kosovo and EU-Ukraine relations affirm the role of the HR as agenda-setter or whether the implementation of

agreements on the ground and the various hurdles encountered lead to a fall back on the liberal intergovernmentalist narrative of the CFSP, which has so far dominated much of the discourse on the Lisbon Treaty.

The book makes an interesting contribution to the study of EU foreign and security policy through its emphasis on policy complexity and the unpacking of what it calls a synthetic methodological framework. The volume establishes that whereas EU conditionality is rigid and uniform, EU member states interest aggregation can change through strategic interaction with governance structures. Furthermore, the empirical analysis of EU-Kosovo and EU-Ukraine relations contributes to our understanding of recent developments and debates surrounding the future of EU enlargement, the Neighbourhood Policy and the Eastern Partnership. This book will serve well students of normative discussions in EU integration, with a specific focus on the CFSP. The volume has benefited from positive reviews from Caposaro and Menon, especially as concerning the contributions of the author to comparative foreign policy analysis and the institutional impact on this policy arena over the decade since the Lisbon Treaty. The most interesting aspect of the book remains its skilfully proposed resolution to member state impasses in addressing significant events in the geographic vicinity of the EU and the potential therein to devise a more impactful European foreign and security policy with adaptive approaches, as evidenced through the case studies.

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BIBLIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION

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