

Book Review

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LOBBYING IN EU FOREIGN POLICY-MAKING: THE CASE OF THE ISRAELI-PALESTINIAN CONFLICT

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Abstract

The book breaks new ground in the literature on lobbying in the European Union by offering a unique analysis of how lobbying works in the context of EU foreign policy-making, with particular focus on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

Keywords

European Union, European Union Foreign Policy, Non-state Actors, Lobbying, Israeli-Palestinian Conflict

Benedetta Voltolini in her book sets out to shed light on a neglected yet promising topic, the role of non-state actors (NSAs) in EU foreign policy-making. Through empirical research Voltolini provides an insightful analysis of the role of NSAs in EU foreign policy-making from agenda-setting stage to the decision-making stage, using the Israeli-Palestinian conflict as to demonstrate how NSAs influenced the EU's foreign policy output. This is shown with three case studies of the conflict: Israeli-EU contention on the territorial scope of EU-Israel Association Agreement (the issue of the rules of origin), the EU's policy towards the Goldstone Report following the Israeli Operation Cast Lead, and the EU-Israel Agreement on Conformity Assessment and Acceptance of Industrial Products. The book employs an innovative analytical framework characterised by three dimensions: roles, frames and levels. These dimensions enable the identification of NSAs and their interaction with policy-makers (roles), their lobbying tools (frames) and their targets (levels).

The book is structured in eight chapters. Following a brief introduction, the first chapter begins by providing a concise overview of two separately growing literatures: the literature on the EU's foreign policy and the literature on NSAs in the EU or interest representation in the EU, which the author intends to combine with her study. Then it provides a detailed description of analytical framework that is employed for assessing the impact of NSAs on the EU's foreign policy. Voltolini identified three types of roles played by NSAs while lobbying the EU depending on the modes of social interaction between NSAs and the EU: the dialogue-builder, the voice-articulator and the opponent, which help to understand who these NSAs are and how they interact with the EU. The book offers three types of frames: political, technical and mixed, which help to understand which instruments NSAs use for influencing the EU's foreign policy. Considering the multilevel nature of EU foreign

policy system, the book seeks to find out at which level(s) NSAs prefer to carry out lobbying activities and how their choice of level(s) affect the role and frames they employ for lobbying. Moreover, investigating the level of lobbying activity provides a valuable insight about the Europeanization of NSAs. In the final part of the first chapter, the book provides a concise overview of the methodology used to assess NSAs' success in translating their inputs into the EU's foreign policy outputs, which allows to measure their actual influence on the EU's foreign policy. The final part also includes a detailed elucidation of why the Israeli-Palestinian conflict was selected as the case study, whether research findings can be generalised beyond the specific context in which the research was conducted, and how empirical data was collected and analysed.

In order familiarise the reader with the policy context in which NSAs carry out their lobbying activities and which actors they interact while lobbying, the second chapter provides a concise historical overview of the EU's involvement in the conflict by analysing EU Member States' efforts to develop a common position; an analysis of EU policies and instruments for dealing with the conflict, EU actors participating in EU policy-making process towards Israel and Palestine; and discusses the main issues on the EU's agenda and hot topics concerning the conflict.

To find out who are NSAs lobbying on the EU's foreign policy regarding the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and what are their main characteristics, chapter three provides an analysis of the population of NSAs that involved or potentially interested in lobbying on the EU's foreign policy towards the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Given the lack of clear and precise list of NSAs lobbying the EU, the author builds her own large, new and innovative dataset by relying on the information drawn from wide variety of data sources, including registers of the European Commission and the European Parliament and inter-institutional Transparency Register, NGO studies, newspaper articles and books and academic articles dealing with Israel and Palestine, the websites of some NSAs with linkages to other NSAs or mentioned other actors, interviews carried out by the author with experts, NSAs and officials. On the basis of this analysis the author has built a dataset of 325 NSAs, which are categorised by the author as business groups, NGOs, solidarity movements, think tanks, the media and the individuals based on their field of activity and organizational features. Moreover, the author makes another typology based on the venue of NSAs, including EU/Europe-based, cross-country and Israel/Palestine-based, which helps to understand how their location affect frequency and form of their lobbying activities. The chapter also discusses main features and trends of NSAs.

Chapters four, five and six deal with concrete examples of lobbying activities of NSAs in three empirical case studies, Israeli-EU contention on the territorial scope of EU-Israel Association Agreement (the issue of the rules of origin), the EU's policy towards the Goldstone Report following the Israeli Operation Cast Lead, and the EU-Israel Agreement on Conformity Assessment and Acceptance of Industrial Products, each of which are related with different policy areas (trade policy, human rights policy, regulatory policy), the competences of the different institutions involved. These three chapters provide a profound delineation of who are NSAs actively lobbying to influence EU policies, what type of role(s) they play and which frame(s) they employ while lobbying the EU, to what extent they succeed in translating their inputs into the EU's foreign policy outputs. The empirical section also offers significant insights about how type of role(s) played and frame(s) employed by NSAs affect their ability to influence the EU's foreign policy towards the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

While previous three empirical chapters seek to analyse lobbying activities carried out by Brussels-based NSAs, chapter seven sets out to analyze the lobbying activities conducted by member state-based NSAs. Given their status as "three big" member states on EU, their weight in policy-making and their crucial role in the definition of foreign policy regarding Israel and Palestine, the book focuses its analysis on the lobbying activities conducted by NSAs based in three member states, namely the United Kingdom, Germany and France on issues related to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

Similar to previous chapters, the chapter provides an in-depth analysis of who are NSAs based in these three member states, what type of role(s) they play and which frame(s) they employ while lobbying at national level. It also provides an analysis of to what extent member state-based NSAs' lobbying activities are Europeanised. Based on what issues, how and at which level member state-based NSAs conduct lobbying activities, the book offers four different patterns of Europeanization of interest representation: no interest, internalisation, supranationalisation and externalisation. Because of her analysis, Voltolini found that lobbying at two levels are disentangled and not strongly connected, which means that there exists a limited or partial Europeanization in which majority of member state-based NSAs conduct their lobbying on issues of national foreign policy at state level.

The book has many merits. First, it provides a comprehensive and deeper understanding of EU foreign policy-making by adding input of NSAs in analysing EU foreign policy-making. Secondly, the book offers an innovative analytical framework, which offers useful tool for future research on lobbying in EU's foreign policy. Particularly, set of roles and frames, which are identified by the author, can be generalised beyond the specific context of this study and be utilised in future research investigating NSAs' role in various areas of the EU's foreign policy. As such, it can serve as a highly useful tool for researchers investigating the role of NSAs in EU foreign policy-making process.

Thirdly, original and meticulously constructed dataset of NSAs involved or potentially interested in lobbying on the EU's approach towards the Israeli-Palestinian conflict would be a valuable reference resource for those who have a specific interest on NSAs lobbying the EU on the issue of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Moreover, the methodology used for building the dataset of NSAs offers a valuable guide for future researchers aiming to form such a dataset of NSAs lobbying the EU in various issues and cases. Fourthly, it provides a differentiated view of EU lobbying by challenging predominant rationalist interpretation of the literature on lobbying in the EU that NSAs and EU institutions are rational and utility-maximising actors, who are articulating and pursuing their pre-defined interests and lobbying is a uni-directional process in which NSAs impose their predefined frames on policy-makers. Alternatively, it provides a constructivist interpretation of NSA-EU interaction that lobbying is a relational or circular process and social interaction between NSAs and EU policy-makers results in a new frame which reflects their shared understanding of the issue.

To conclude, this analytically innovative, empirically rich and methodologically rigorous book makes an original contribution to existing knowledge of how lobbying works in the context of EU foreign policy-making. The book will appeal to policy-makers, practitioners, scholars and students who are interested in broadening their knowledge of lobbying in EU foreign policy-making. It is a fine piece of research, which demonstrates that NSAs play a significant role in EU foreign policy-making and make noteworthy contribution to the framing process of the foreign policy of the European Union. In many respects, it is intellectually stimulating and can serve as a building block for further research.

BIBLIOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

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