

## *Small States in the European Union: Coping with Structural Disadvantages*

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With increased interest in cooperation beyond the nation-state and the proliferation of International Organisations (IOs) and regimes in the post Second World War period, International Relations (IR) research has tended to focus mostly on bigger rather than smaller players in these groups. Hence the significance for the wider discipline of the role of small member states in EU negotiations. Small states have an incentive to exhibit strong commitment to institutions for collective action, as they seek to protect and promote their interests. Although Diana Panke's book comes to complement an already rich literature on EU negotiations, it does so in a most insightful way in relation to the negotiation activities of small member states and their success prospects, which are ultimately dependent upon the powers of persuasion, mediation and lobbying.

Panke's main theme is captured in the book title. She undertakes a comparative analysis by investigating the day-to-day negotiations within the EU in which 19 small member states can gain influence over EU policies through the Council of Ministers (both at the level of working groups and the COREPER). The 19 EU member states examined are namely Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Portugal, Slovakia, Slovenia and Sweden. In the Introduction of the book, Panke defines small states as those with less than average votes in the Council of Ministers. As Panke explains, these states also have smaller economies (and therefore less bargaining power to advocate their interests), leaner administrations and fewer policy experts. It is in this context that Panke addresses the two main research questions of the book: (1) Why do some small states participate in EU negotiations more actively than others? (2) How and under which conditions do negotiation strategies of small states influence their prospects of negotiation success?

Taking this as her point of departure, Panke implicitly divides the book into two main thematic parts. Chapters 2–5 deal exclusively with the first research question, investigating why some small states are more active than others when engaging in EU negotiations, despite the fact that they all face very similar structural disadvantages. These disadvantages may take the form of constraints in the process of uploading national policies to the EU level, in influencing policy outcomes through bargaining vis-à-vis other member states in the Council (individual strategies), as well as in argument-based lobbying on EU institutions or coalition formation to increase their

bargaining leverage (compound strategies). The second thematic part of the book comprises chapters 6–9, which focus on the second research question, thus attempting to shed light on the reasons why some small states are more successful than others in influencing negotiation outcomes, as well as the possible scope conditions under which different strategies can be effective.

Methodologically the author combines a mixture of quantitative and qualitative techniques in order to investigate the extent and frequency with which small states apply a variety of persuasion-based and bargaining-based shaping strategies. Before embarking on this examination however, Panke first determines the types of size-related disadvantages that small states face and how they affect policy-making. She determines this, both theoretically and empirically by recording the results of more than 100 interviews conducted with national officials charged with representing their national governments at the supranational forum. While the theoretical framework of the analysis and the results of the quantitative research are discussed in the main text, the author also gives lengthy interview quotes at the bottom of the pages as footnotes. This makes the book much easier to read, as it can in fact be read in two different contexts: that of the theoretical framework and that of the empirical findings.

Panke then uses a multivariate OLS regression analysis in order to examine the effect of the negotiation strategies used by the small EU member states and define their degree of success. She concludes that, the more frequently states use these negotiation strategies, the more successful they are likely to be. She recognises, however, that a significant limitation of this approach is that not all hypotheses can be quantified. She addresses this constraint by conducting two qualitative case studies on EU negotiations: spirit drinks and specifically vodka (a highly politicised case) and pesticides (a very technical case). Panke argues that concentrating on niche policies can help small states in negotiations; hence the detailed case studies in the aforementioned areas, which are lesser known and, arguably, more insignificant. Although both cases belong to the wider sphere of agricultural policy, they demonstrate distinctions between this, rather heterogeneous group of small EU states. The group in fact involves those states that are more and those that are less actively engaged in the EU negotiation process. The author concludes that the more actively engaged a state is and the more it concentrates its rather limited resources on a specific set of policy priorities, the more likely it is to cope with its inherent structural disadvantages and the more successful it will be in EU negotiations.

All in all, Diana Panke's intervention is indeed a welcome addition to the IR and Europeanist literature in state negotiations in International/Regional Organisations. More specifically, it makes a significant contribution to the literature on small states' negotiation, especially from an empirical perspective, while it also comes to enhance the bodies of literature on IR, Europeanization (from the perspective of how states' administrations adapt to EU pressure), Intergovernmentalism, comparative policy analysis, as well as the literature on domestic coordination.

While the EU itself strengthens the position of small states through the establishment of institutions in which member states participate and have formal equality with bigger states, most

bargaining chips are not in their hands. Through a most comprehensive approach, Panke demonstrates empirically how small EU member states can follow negotiating, bargaining, mediating and persuasion strategies that will help them to punch above their weight and not merely be bystanders. The author succeeds in advancing the reader's collective understanding of the role of small players in the EU forum in particular and in supranational governance structures in general.

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