

**CHARLES UNIVERSITY IN PRAGUE**  
**Faculty of Social Sciences**  
**Institute of International Studies**  
**M. A. DISSERTATION MARK SHEET**  
**(Review)**

Student: **Djordje Dimitrov**

Program: **European Politics and Society – Vaclav Havel Joint Master Program**

Title: **The European Union as the Mediator in Belgrade-Pristina dialogue: What influenced mediation effectiveness?** 88 p. Master thesis. Charles University, Faculty of Social Sciences, Institute of International Studies. Prague 2021

Reviewed by:

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#### 1. CONTENT AND AIM OF THE THESIS:

As the main aim of his thesis, Djordje Dimitrov decided to examine the European Union as a mediator in the case of Belgrade-Pristina dialogue. By focusing on dialogue's development, he analyses factors that influenced its mediation effectiveness and reveals which of them caused its lowering after 2015. Designed as a qualitative case study the project compares three distinguished stages of the case by implementing a combination of congruence method and process tracing. Dimitrov finds that while the strategy has remained the same, levels of coherence and leverages have changed due to the weakening of the EU's strength.

#### 2. ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION:

Dimitrov's project has a coherent structure divided into four main parts. In the first section, the author discusses literature and the theoretical framework. The second part offers an important historical context on the Belgrade-Priština dialogue. The third analyses three stages of mediation (Technical phase, Mogherini's phase, and Lajčák's phase). The final part is focused on a cross dialogue comparison.

The primary aim is to answer the question of what factors explain lower EU's mediation effectiveness in Belgrade-Priština Dialogue after 2015. To analyse this question, Dimitrov employs a theoretical framework dealing with the concepts of power (mediation and constructivism) to demonstrate the main features, difficulties, and challenges of the dialogue's development and its effectiveness.

Taking into consideration scholarship on the Belgrade-Priština relation, Dimitrov's project is innovative in the way he compares the different phases of the negotiation process. He focuses on diverse factors that impact mediation outcomes.

Designed as a qualitative case study, the project combines congruence method and process tracing to examine the selected dependent (mediation effectiveness) and independent (leverage) variables. In addition, Dimitrov analyses EU's coherence and mediation strategy to get a broader picture of the mediation process.

#### 3. PRESENTATION AND STYLE:

In terms of presentation and style, there are some substantial shortcomings (grammatical mistakes, typing errors, wrong inverted commas, ununified headings etc.). Language and syntax quality are average; some sentences are incomplete, very difficult to read, and some of them even make no sense. Final proofreading should have been much more rigorous. Yet, I assume that the paper formally meets the criteria of an MA thesis.

#### 4. COMMENTS:

Dimitrov's thesis focuses on an actual and highly sensitive case of the unresolved relation between Serbia's leadership and the former autonomous province of Serbia, Kosovo, formally independent since 2008. Naturally, up-to-dateness of the topic has affected Dimitrov's chances to gather relevant empirical evidence. The plan to base his project on conducting personal interviews failed due to the unwillingness of many requested representatives to

participate. Those who were willing to communicate were reluctant to respond to delicate questions. Also, I need to emphasize that Dimitrov's project was affected by Covid-19.

I have following comments to Dimitrov's thesis:

- 1) Instead of critically discussing the scholarship and reflecting it within the scope of the author's research in literature review, Dimitrov offers a list of authors' names and titles. Their concepts and findings are just briefly introduced, not discussed in greater detail to demonstrate why and how their theoretical approaches and concepts are relevant to Dimitrov's project. This part thus does not communicate well with the author's primary intent to analyse the EU mediation.
- 2) Due to the secrecy and non-transparency that characterises the Dialogue, Dimitrov decided to scrutinize the negotiation process through relevant media articles and news on its development. In addition, he declared his intent to analyse official documents and other materials issued by the EU, Belgrade, and Pristina, plus conduct interviews with authorities related to the Dialogue. While interviews in terms of methodology are discussed, it is methodologically unclear how Dimitrov approached the media content analysis and which methods he used. Only abstract and a table depicting research design and objectives mention that content and document analysis would be applied. However, its discussion is missing. Also, it is unsettled what type, how many media outlets, policy papers and international documents he intended to analyse. This fact reveals thesis limitations as the sample used appears somewhat random.
- 3) Although Dimitrov thoroughly discusses the overview of the Dialogue's development and its distinguished phases (especially, the contextual chapter on Belgrade-Pristina dialogue is very well) written, the most important chapter focused on discourse analysis is too descriptive, repetitive, and rather shallow. Instead of properly working with the gathered empirical material - with the collected data from interviews and media content analysis - the author describes the variables detected in the previous sections, using mainly the secondary literature and international reports. I assume that it would be more useful to incorporate excerpts of the discourse applied either in the conducted interviews or in the local media to deliver the main goal. Instead, the data from conducted interviews serve only to acknowledge or confirm some observation or argument. The same could be said about the data from media content analysis. Frequently, the author makes some argument in the form of a statement without any further elaboration. This crucial section thus lacks careful analysis.
- 4) Author's findings summarised, in conclusion, are not related and discussed in relation to previous scholarship. In what ways does Dimitrov's project differ from the other scholarship? Finally, it would be more compelling to include his findings from the media content analysis or the conducted interviews into his final discussion in conclusions.

#### 5. QUESTIONS TO DISCUSS:

1. Please explain more closely your method of media content analysis.
2. Please discuss which of the distinguished phases can be understood as the successful one and why.
3. Which threats, limitations, and opportunities have you detected in your research on the Dialogue?

#### 6. RECOMMENDATIONS:

I recommend Djordje Dimitrov's thesis with a proposed assessment of C.

Date: Prague, August 20, 2021

Signature: