



Universiteit
Leiden
The Netherlands

**Inclusivity in mediation and peacebuilding: UN,
neighboring states, and global powers, written by
Daisaku Higashi**
Günaydın, A.S.

Citation

Günaydın, A. S. (2023). Inclusivity in mediation and peacebuilding: UN, neighboring states, and global powers, written by Daisaku Higashi. *The Hague Journal Of Diplomacy*, 18(4), 725-727.
doi:10.1163/1871191x-bja10140

Version: Publisher's Version

License: [Licensed under Article 25fa Copyright Act/Law \(Amendment Taverne\)](#)

Downloaded from: <https://hdl.handle.net/1887/4307518>

Note: To cite this publication please use the final published version (if applicable).

Daisaku Higashi. *Inclusivity in Mediation and Peacebuilding: UN, Neighboring States, and Global Powers* (Cheltenham: Edward Elgar, 2022). Pp. 192. £20 (eBook). ISBN: 9781800880528.

The rise in the number of intra-state conflicts makes the ways of dealing with wars a more demanding issue than has previously been the case. In *Inclusivity in Mediation and Peacebuilding: UN, Neighboring States, and Global Powers*, Daisaku Higashi focuses on how civil wars have been addressed in regard to the question of inclusivity in mediation, based on his field research in South Sudan, Afghanistan, Syria, Yemen, Iraq, and East Timor and interviews with key political actors and representatives. Although attention to inclusivity in scholarly works and UN documents has increased, the implementation of inclusivity in most mediation cases has been challenging. By distinguishing between the different natures of inclusivity in mediation during armed conflicts and post-conflict peacebuilding, Higashi argues that a flexible approach to inclusivity is necessary to succeed. The book illustrates how inclusive and exclusive approaches to mediation have affected peace processes in various contexts of armed conflicts.

There is a major scholarly debate on mediation in inclusivity. How many actors should be included in peace negotiations for an effective and sustainable peace? Despite the cruciality of inclusiveness, sometimes a smaller circle of negotiations is preferable in reaching an outcome. In this respect, Higashi makes a distinction between negotiations during armed conflict and the implementation part of the agreement after a ceasefire is reached. In post-conflict peacebuilding, Higashi emphasizes the essentiality of including as many segments of society (women, youth, civil society) as possible, as he particularly warns against political exclusion, which may cause a recurrence of armed conflicts. In Chapters 4 and 7, the author elucidates how the political exclusion of the Taliban in Afghanistan and of Sunni factions in Iraq resulted in civil wars during the nation-building efforts led by the US. These examples also show how important the timing of inclusive negotiations is. On the other side, the author gives the example of East Timor, where an inclusive UN-led approach successfully paved the way for nation-building.

Higashi observes there might be situations of armed conflicts where only influential groups should be included if negotiations are to result in a ceasefire. In such cases, he states that civil society groups may participate in negotiations as observers, for pragmatic reasons. Mediators and conflicting parties should decide how to include civil society groups in the peace process. Allowing such room for manoeuvre in the negotiation process of armed conflicts constitutes the flexible approach that the book recommends mediators should adopt.

In any case, the author argues that, in principle, all groups should be included in the peace process as long as they have the political will to comply with the peace agreement.

A second main argument of the book focuses on the mediating roles of the UN, neighbouring states, and global powers during conflicts and in post-conflict peacebuilding. The book maintains that the UN should play a central role in post-conflict peacebuilding with its comparative advantage in impartiality and credibility as an international actor. However, the situation differs in armed conflict, where global powers and neighbouring states bear the primary responsibility and leverage in convincing the fighting parties to end the war. Based on earlier experiences, the author argues that the UN's role can be very limited when the global powers and neighbouring states do not share a similar strategy concerning reaching a peace settlement. In such scenarios, intervening states can even spoil the peace process and undermine UN efforts. In Chapters 5 and 6, the author elaborates on the Syrian and Yemeni cases to show how UN mediation can be undermined by the intervening states who prioritize one-sided victories of the parties they support. These two examples are also significant in highlighting that UN mediation is not sufficient to end a war when there is no consensus among the intervening states about reaching a peace settlement.

By exploring mediation processes in several protracted conflicts, this book presents significant insights by suggesting a balance between a flexible and an inclusive approach to peace and peacebuilding processes. However, there are several unanswered questions that need to be addressed to consolidate the concept of a flexible approach to inclusivity. What are the red lines in flexibility? Who determines the frame of inclusivity? How can civil society or political groups be integrated into the process during the transition phase from peace settlement to post-conflict peacebuilding? Further elaboration on these points would strengthen the arguments for flexible and inclusive approaches. Besides, while the book tends to apply an interpretivist approach based on an analysis of multiple cases, causal mechanisms for the arguments seem methodologically weak.

As identified by the author in the cases of South Sudan and Yemen, although attention to inclusivity may help to achieve some tangible results, it is not always the key element in addressing crucial problems. Thus, further studies on the issue may incorporate other parameters into the discussion, such as distributions of power and interest. A focus on the relationship between inclusivity and power structures may help to foster a more effective understanding of the inclusive approach.

Last but not least, as Higashi asserts in the final part of the book, one of the critical issues of international mediation and peacebuilding is the clash of ideology and interest between liberal Western states with other states and actors involved in conflict. This book omits the reflection of such differences on the UN structure and what to expect from peace- and nation-building, which cannot only be constrained to the debate of autocratic and democratic regimes. A feasible inclusive approach should go beyond the physical participation of multiple actors in the process and be open to diverse cultural and ideological realities and expectations. Otherwise, depending on the context, it would be harder to achieve realistic outcomes in international peace efforts. Thus, more critical approaches to the UN perspective are vital where the Western understanding of peacebuilding is not acknowledged as the sole vision for post-conflict environments.

Overall, this book is a significant contribution to the practice and literature of international mediation and inclusivity, where it incorporates field and empirical knowledge into the academic debates. Basing the idea of a flexible approach on challenging conflict contexts and supporting the idea with a great number of interviews with key international and political practitioners, makes the analyses more congruous and worthwhile. It is to be hoped that this book will take the research on international mediation a step further for critical studies on the theme.

Ahmet Serdar Günaydin | ORCID: 0000-0002-6909-3650
Faculty of Governance and Global Affairs, Universiteit Leiden,
The Hague, The Netherlands
a.s.gunaydin@fgga.leidenuniv.nl