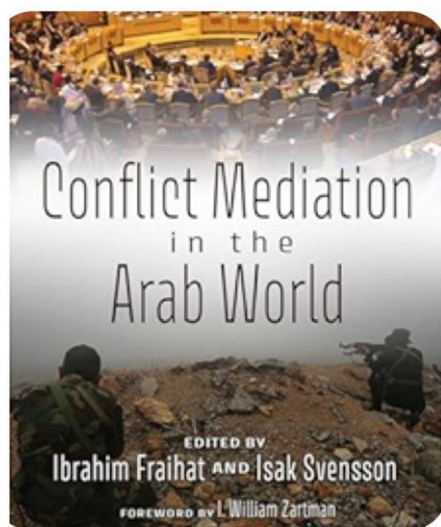


Report on

Online book presentation of a recently published book titled “Conflict Mediation in the Arab World”

13 May 2024



Swedish Dialogue Institute
for the Middle East and North Africa

Report

On May 13th, the Swedish Dialogue Institute for the Middle East and North Africa hosted an online book presentation of a recently published book titled 'Conflict Mediation in the Arab World'. The meeting was moderated by Charlotta Sparre, Director of the Dialogue Institute, and was attended by over 50 participants mainly researchers, students and practitioners from the MENA region and Europe.

The session started with a presentation by and conversation with the two editors of the book, Dr. Ibrahim Freihat from the Doha Institute for Graduate Studies and Dr. Isak Svensson of Uppsala University. Mediation advisors Karma Ekmekji of the Issam Fares Institute for Public Policy and International Affairs, and Barbro Svedberg from the Folke Bernadotte Academy (FBA) then joined the discussion and provided their reflections from practitioner perspectives. This was followed by a discussion amongst the participants.

The book is the first comprehensive reference on mediation in the Arab region and it includes analysis of most mediation cases, including Iraq, Libya, Palestine, Sudan, Syria, and Yemen. It contributes to a better understanding of why most international mediation efforts have historically failed in the Middle East and North Africa context and deepens the understanding of the increasing complexities and changing dynamics of the region. Thereby the book is a valuable resource for academics, policy makers, and practitioners interested in conflict resolution and management in the Middle East and North Africa.

Dr. Freihat and Dr. Svensson highlighted that the book aims to bridge theory and practice. It explores mediation efforts from both internal and external perspectives, integrating theoretical frameworks to deepen our understanding of these conflicts. A key focus of the book is unraveling the complexities of why mediation sometimes fails, despite vigorous efforts, addressing factors like timing, efficiency, and the varying motives and mandates of mediation initiatives.

Dr. Freihat mentioned that the idea of the book started already in 2018 due to the lack of success of international mediation in resolving conflicts in the region. Several factors were mentioned as contributing to the lack of success, such as the complexities of the conflicts, the lack of inclusivity in the mediation processes, and some processes being externally driven and lacked local ownership.

Dr. Svensson highlighted some main questions in the research, including reasons behind mediation working in some circumstances and not in others, the relevance of timing of the mediation, and strategies for the mediator's role in trust building, looking at different levels - between countries, within countries and at a local level.

Mediation advisor Karma Ekmekji said the book was a valuable contribution to better understanding of mediation processes in the Arab world and in giving insights and developing mediation practices. She described the book as “holistic and pragmatic” and highlighted the centrality of inclusivity and stressed the crucial importance of enhancing the inclusion of women in peace processes and national dialogues. She also brought to the attention that new forms of conflict are evolving (e.g. cyber wars) and will require development of new mediation tools. Also, Barbro Svedberg from the FBA stressed the importance of inclusion, with an emphasis on women and youth, as well as broader societal inclusion (e.g. civil society) for more effective peace processes. In addition, she highlighted significance of understanding history and recognizing past grievances and collective traumas.

Following the presentations, participants took part in the enriching discussion that highlighted a wide range of topics, including the internationalization of conflicts, injustices arising from lack of inclusion (e.g. of women and youth), the emergence of non-state actors, challenges in dealing with so called spoilers, and the role of religious leaders in mediation.

Relevant links

- Link to the book: [Conflict Mediation in the Arab World – Syracuse University Press](#)
- Link to the recording of the presentation: [Book presentation on "Conflict Mediation in the Arab World" - YouTube](#)
- Link to the interview with Prof. Isak Svensson about the published book. In this interview, he highlights the importance of learning from history and learning from past mediation experiences – on what has worked and what did not. Based on theory and evidence new and better methods can be developed [Interview with Prof. Isak Svensson about the published book "Conflict Mediation in the Arab World" \(youtube.com\)](#)