

BABEȘ-BOLYAI UNIVERSITY
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DOCTORAL THESIS

ETHICS AND MODERN LEADERSHIP IN BUSINESS DIPLOMACY

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ABSTRACT

In the context of an increasingly interconnected and complex global economy, this thesis investigates the critical nexus of ethics, leadership, and business diplomacy, with a particular emphasis on Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (SMEs). Ethical leadership is analyzed not only as a moral imperative but also as a strategic asset that fosters trust, cooperation, and sustainable competitive advantage across diverse cultural and regulatory environments. The research highlights the role of ethical leaders as adaptive guides who navigate multifaceted challenges, including geopolitical shifts, regulatory demands, and technological advancements, while emphasizing the strategic importance of business diplomacy in managing cross-border relations and negotiations.

Focusing on the internationalization of Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (SMEs), especially South Asian and Romanian enterprises operating in Japan, this study explores how cultural dynamics influence entrepreneurial leadership and ethical conduct. It underscores the significance of ethical practices—transparency, accountability, and cultural sensitivity—in enhancing SMEs' credibility and resilience in global markets. The work also integrates theoretical perspectives from international relations, such as realism, liberalism, constructivism, and the concept of soft power, alongside Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) principles, to frame the ethical and diplomatic dimensions of global business leadership.

This thesis aims to contribute both practically and theoretically by offering actionable insights for policymakers, business leaders, educators, and consultants. It endeavours to support the development of more responsible, culturally aware, and sustainable business leadership and diplomatic strategies. Ultimately, the research aspires to foster cross-cultural understanding, strengthen organizational ethical frameworks, and leverage diversity as a driver of innovation, thereby enhancing the long-term success and sustainability of SMEs in the global economy.

Keywords: ethical leadership, business diplomacy, small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), cultural dynamics, international relations, sustainability

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