

Babeş – Bolyai University,  
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## **DOCTORAL THESIS**

**(ABSTRACT)**

### **POWER DEFINITION AND IDENTIFICATION IN THE CONTEMPORARY INTERNATIONAL SYSTEM**

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Keywords: power, post-Cold War and post-September 2011 international system, the manifestation of power, power resources, soft power, hard power, smart power, conversion capacity, power diffusion, the transition of power, global governance, energy, energy diplomacy.

Power is the ability to transform resources into objectives and results. This ability may be based on coercion (the ability to determine an entity to act in a certain way against her will, by force, intimidation, threat or other form of direct pressure) or non-coercive forms as manipulation or persuasion.

After the end of the Cold War, power is no longer considered in purely military terms. Globalization and interdependence have increased the economic, political and social dimensions of power. In addition, the state is no longer the unique pillar of security although remains the main actor in shaping security strategies.

The objective of the thesis is to identify new trends in the exercise of power by the actors of contemporary international system. The paper also aims to find an answer to questions such as: how actors exercise power in the international system to achieve their objectives? what are the instruments of power? what are the challenges in the new context of globalization and informational age?

The first chapter describes the evolution and characteristics of post-Cold War international system. Therefore, the end of the Cold War opened up new strategic and economical options as well as a new stage in the institutional dynamics. The integration into an economical and power relations system highly dominated by the U.S. paved the way for globalization and accelerated the internationalization of financial markets, products and activities.<sup>1</sup> The international system gained an unipolar dimension along with the U.S. supremacy. Moreover, the end of the Cold War generated the conditions for the restructuring of the international system. This was the end of a power structure shaped by the balance between the U.S. and the Soviet Union. Since then, the

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<sup>1</sup> Genevieve Schmeder, *From the cold war to the new international disorder*, The Hardship of Nations : Exploring the Paths of Modern Capitalism, Edited by Benjamin Coriat University of Paris XIII , Pascal Petit CEPREMAP-CNRS, Paris, Geneviève Schméder Conservatoire national des arts et métiers, Paris, 2006, p.9

international system has been in continuous change: from a unipolar one, characterized by U.S. primacy to a multilateral or multipolar, characterized by the existence of several power poles, and finally, to a highly globalized one, including new networks characterized by new forms of interaction, diffusion of power, multiple non-governmental actors, complex interdependence and new global challenges<sup>2</sup>.

The second chapter describes the characteristics of power in the post-Cold War international system. After analyzing the dynamics of power in the post-Cold War and post-September 2001 international system, the main characteristics of power asymmetry can be identified: diffusion, transition and contextuality.

Furthermore, the forces that have shaped the character/nature of power in the system after the end of the Cold War are: globalization, informational revolution (expanding use of the Internet) and interdependence. They have influenced the nature of power in terms of resources reconsideration and the change of power concentration and manifestation in the international system. To better capture the dynamics and characteristics of power in the post-war international system, these developments were analyzed using a power theory by Prof. Joseph S.Nye Jr., who identifies two basic types of power: *soft* and *hard* power.

The third chapter identifies power resources after the Cold War. International relations theorists address power from two perspectives: power as resource and power as behavioral outcomes (controlling the outcome). In this respect, various types of power are analyzed: military power, economic power, cyber power, the power of narrative and so on, in terms of resources and behavior. Hence we find that in a system as complex and dynamic as the 21<sup>st</sup> century international system, in which units and interactions are in a permanent dynamic, power is contextual in its nature. Thus, even if power resource is a prerequisite to its exercise by the actors in the system, analyzing the different resources can provide only the possibility of identifying trends and characteristics in the exercise of power.

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<sup>2</sup> <sup>2</sup> Vasile Pușcaș, *Intercultural communication in managing global interdependence*, paper presented at the International Congress on "Soft Power", Institute for International Studies, November, 2009, Berlin, pp.1-5

Chapter IV deals with power capability development (conversion capacity, strategy, cooperation) of the international actors. It involves actors ability to convert resources into results. The chapter also describes Joseph Nye's approach in terms of power conversion through the *smart power* concept. This is defined as the ability of an actor to combine soft and hard power resources in an effective strategy<sup>3</sup>.

The concept of power and the reconfiguration of the international system (shapes and trends) in the early twenty-first century are described in the fifth chapter. In the current international context, the main features of the distribution of power within the system are the diffusion of power and power transition.

The 21st century international system is multipolar, institutional, polycentric, and multi-actor, meaning that non-state groups such as corporations and NGOs are becoming increasingly more influential on key issues on the international agenda. Therefore, the current international system characteristics and trends reveal that the system can operate without a leader (leadership) while creating the premises for a new global governance mechanism.<sup>4</sup>

The innovative approaches of the 21<sup>st</sup> century global governance involve milder forms of cooperation compared to the highly regulated regimes inherited from the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Therefore, consultation appears to replace regulation, codes of conduct prevail over binding rules, regional initiatives save us from the long debates in multilateral forums.<sup>5</sup>

In this context different mechanisms are needed for different problems. They can be implemented through cooperation, integration and complementarity of the bilateral, regional and global answers.

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<sup>3</sup> Joseph S. Nye, Jr, *Responding to my critics and concluding thoughts* , in *Soft Power and US Foreign Policy*, edited by Inderjeet Parmar and Michael Cox, 2010, pp. 215-220

<sup>4</sup> Parag Khana, *Surge of the Second World*, *The National Interest*, May-June 2012, pp.1-6

<sup>5</sup> *Ibidem*, p.19



The next chapter of the thesis includes a case study on the conversion of energy resources into results, in this case, the Russian and Turkish models. To better highlight how state actors use their resources to achieve results, the case study examines how the energy resource is used by actors in exercising power (energy diplomacy) to achieve the final result.

Therefore, energy is a central pillar of Russia's foreign policy and an essential source of the projection of its current political power and international prestige. Without the ability to produce and provide energy, Russia would not have its present status. Also, Russia would not have the same influence as a member of the G8, wouldn't raise U.S. attention as it does now, and would not have the same relationship with several major EU states, notably Germany. Finally, Russia would raise little interest in its relations with China.

Russia's energy diplomacy consists in a model that transforms the energy resources into different objectives such as strengthening Russian influence in the Asian region as well as the consolidation of its power at an international level.

Another relevant example is that of Turkey using its geopolitical position as a transit country for energy resources as a tool to achieve its foreign policy objectives. Turkey's multilateral energy policy as a transit corridor for energy resources is a successful strategy of converting energy resources, specifically to achieve its goal of becoming a regional power.

Therefore, energy can open the path to ensure an influential position in the international system, both for the oil and natural gas exporters as well as for transit states. Therefore, energy resources have evolved into effective policy instruments for a wide range of developed and developing countries that aim to achieve their national objectives, as well as to expand their international influence.

In conclusion, power is a central concept in international relations, but also a fundamental tool of analysis in political and social sciences. Defining power proved to be a very difficult task because power remains a multidimensional concept with multiple and, sometimes, elusive meanings. As a result, there are many opinions about

what power is and how it can be measured. The main theoretical paradigms address the concept of power from two perspectives: power as a resource and power as behavioral outcomes (manifestation). The concept of power in the 21<sup>st</sup> century is reflected by the theories of professor Joseph S. Nye Jr. who divides power into three categories: hard power (based on coercion and military resources) soft power (based on attraction, recruitment and cultural and ideological resources, etc.). and *smart power* (ie using hard and soft resources in a successful strategy).

The events that followed September 2001 and especially the failure of the military campaign in Iraq had a major impact on the way power is exercised in the international system both in terms of resources and of strategy. This experience proved for the first time the failure of military instruments (hard power) to address new challenges and led to consideration of other types of resources such as the ideological, technological and economical ones. Essentially, the measurement of an actor's power never again took into consideration only military capabilities.

Therefore, globalization has forced states to rethink the concept of power. Moreover, the informational revolution has reduced communication costs due to the expansion of Internet use. Therefore, the access of networking organizations and individuals to the international agenda has been widely opened.

In this respect, it becomes clear that in a complex and dynamic international system such as the one of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the structures and interactions are in constant evolution, power being contextual in its nature.

Although during the Cold War, power meant military resources and coercion, this concept has become, in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, more complex and tends to include new resources and strategies. These strategies vary from the traditional ones to the most innovative, such as the cyber resources.

According to the research of this thesis, the power is, in addition to resources and the ability to adapt to new challenges, flexibility in using and combining different types of instruments to achieve the desired results.

Regarding the international influence in terms of power, it depends on the capacity to integrate new actors, the cooperation with them in the international system and the capacity to manage complex interdependencies within the system.