

Babeş-Bolyai University, Cluj - Napoca
Faculty of European Studies
“Paradigma Europeană” Doctoral School

**ASYMMETRIC INTERDEPENDENCE AND INTERNATIONAL MEDIATION IN
EUROPEAN UNION**

(Titlul original al tezei)

**INTERDEPENDENȚA ASIMETRICĂ ȘI MEDIEREA INTERNAȚIONALĂ
ÎN UNIUNEA EUROPEANĂ**

PhD Thesis
ABSTRACT

Scientific coordinator: Prof. Univ.Dr.Vasile PUȘCAȘ

PhD Candidate: Ramona Alexandra ROȘU

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ABSTRACT

Key words: globalization, European Union, asymmetric interdependence, Communitarianism, Intergovernmentalism, International Mediation.

The Member States of the European Union are part of the most interdependent continent in the world. The increase of asymmetric interdependence within the European Union – which manifests not only in the economic area, but also in the political, social, cultural, communication as well as other areas – is intrinsically explosive and this situation may heighten the prospect of economical and political conflicts within integrated systems.

The links between asymmetric interdependence, conflict and mediation remained the subject of little systematic scrutiny. Discord, disputes and crises among Member States due to increased asymmetric interdependence could lead to the dissolution of the European Union. Greater attention, therefore, needs to be focused on specifying the causal and constitutive mechanisms and the implications of this relationship.

The focus of the present study is the core of the politics on interdependence, namely, the management of asymmetric interdependence, in the context of the European Union. The management of asymmetric interdependence is not something that most scholars of International Relations and European Integration deal with currently. However, as interdependence intensifies, the Member States of the Union are subjected to a severe test due to the asymmetric distribution of power.

The diagram showing the nature of interdependence was complemented by the interdependence – conflict relation. This does not mean that the interdependence in itself determines the impact of friction forces on interstate relations, but some characteristics of the type of interdependence present in the relation, i.e., the vulnerability dimension of interdependence.

In this study, we aimed to demonstrate that a synthetic theoretical approach, based on the conjunction between the institutionalist and constructivist approaches, on different levels of the international structure (especially the distribution of interests, distribution of capabilities and the

distribution of knowledge) would offer a more inclusive and more comprehensive perspective on political outcomes in the framework of systemic approaches to international relations.

We argued that this synthetic vision is in fact compatible with two fundamental positions in the field of ICR (International Conflict Resolution) which were frequently considered to be in a relation of opposition: *conflict settlement* and *conflict transformation*.

Thus, one of the arguments of this study is the fact that in the conflict resolution processes, two types of approaches are needed: the causal neoliberal approach and the constitutive socio-constructivist approach.

Therefore, among the policy instruments that serve to resolve conflicts and preventive diplomacy, mediation is the most operative version because it incorporates both types of approaches.

In the third section we examined the management of the fundamental disagreements between Member States of the European Union, which occurred in the seemingly benign environment of interdependence, in decision-making processes under conditions of the Community Method and the Intergovernmental Method.

We found that the two procedures co-exist at different levels in the decision-making processes in the EU and that, in both contexts, the inefficiency of disputes management produced problems which remained unresolved, in other terms, “arrears” that have been deferred from one IGC to the next, or for subsequent revisions, with ominous consequences for the European integration process.

As a result, the instrument used to resolve these disputes must be one that responds to the manifestations of both procedures. If in the context of Intergovernmentalism, the conflicting interests of the Member States are reconciled using negotiation games (with an intrinsically explosive nature and which inevitably raise severe political problems), in the context of Communitarianism, the disputes between Member States are resolved through institutions using instruments such as: arbitration, adjudication, and instruments of electoral engineering, both versions of managing discontinuities limiting the resolution process at the *conflict settlement* level.

Thus, given the synthetic theoretical approach on resolving conflicts formulated in this study, it becomes evident that *smart* mediation is the most adequate mechanism for conflict

resolution in the context of asymmetric interdependence, and implicitly, in the context of asymmetric divergent interests between the Member States of the European Union.

The case study examines the implications of asymmetric rapport between EU-27 and EU-3 in the case of the Lisbon Treaty revision. This rapport was deepened as a result of the proposal to establish a permanent system for crisis management in the Euro Zone (European Stability Mechanism) which demanded also the EU Treaty change.

The study reveals the effects of the inadequate management of the economic governance issue and also of the disagreements occurred as a result of the financial market tensions which represented a serious indicator of a dangerous fracture occurred between Member States of the European Union at many different levels, echoing the logic of “hard” negotiations and the reconfiguration of the conflicts between the small and medium Member States of the European Union on one side, and large Member States on the other.

Chapter IX, which concludes this paper, aims to identify the most appropriate form of institution building to solve / prevent conflicts caused by asymmetric interdependencies within the EU.

In justifying the need for establishing a permanent European internal mediation platform, we defended the rationalist view that external actors will seek to maximize their own interests, and also the constructivist elements on collective identity that the states of the Union need to re-define and the profound implications of this phenomenon.

But in most respects, what this chapter accomplished was to provide the foundations and map-out the intrinsic attributes of such an institutional construction.

As the discontinuities between Member States of the Union are amplified, these become the main challenges to peace and stability in Europe.

Europe must consolidate an internal mediation model by integrating existing instruments and conceptual approaches and by recognizing the need for such institutional construction in order to be capable of responding to the risks and threats it is facing today.

The concept of internal mediation should be understood as a broad and comprehensive concept, which covers multiple sectors and levels and which addresses the root causes of the fractures within the EU, helping Europe to move forward.

The incorporation of a unit mandated to mediate internal conflicts of the Union could diminish the credibility gap between the treaty commitments on one hand,- regarding the mutual respect among peoples (Art. 3 (ex Article 2 TEU), (5)), the respect for the equality of Member States before the Treaties (Art. 4, (2)), and especially, the respect for the principle of transparency in decision-making processes (Art. 1 (ex Article 1 TEU)) -, and the achievement of the assumed commitments, on the other hand.

Research Methodology:

The present study is based on qualitative research methods, its infrastructure being built upon a triangulation of qualitative data collection. The sources for qualitative data collection are (1) firstly, the primary sources, namely, legal documents, laws, official documents and statements; (2) secondary sources as articles, memorials, interviews, political biographies, reports by independent press agencies, websites, and newspapers; and (3) thirdly, the examination of the empirical findings are complemented by examining the specialized literature using especially studies and articles, journals collections, specialized databases and documents in edited collections.

Case Study - The Lisbon Treaty Revision

The case study sphere is extended to the analysis of disputes between allied countries generated by asymmetrical interdependence in the case of Lisbon Treaty revision; we focus on the analysis of the decision-making processes under the conditions of the examined events, and also on the analysis of the asymmetric rapport between EU-27 – EU-3 because, although Europe acts as a bloc with all 27 member states discussing issues and unanimously making decisions on foreign policy, behind the scenes, only the largest member states with the most resources take the lead: France, Germany, and the United Kingdom.

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