

“BABEȘ-BOLYAI” UNIVERSITY OF CLUJ-NAPOCA

DOCTORAL THESIS

**EU MEMBER STATES’ STRATEGIC AND AD-HOC ALLIANCES.
PROJECTION ON ROMANIA’S POSITIONING
AFTER THE ACCESSION TO THE EU.**

- ABSTRACT -

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ABSTRACT

Key words: alliances, strategic orientations, negotiations, European Union, member states, European decision-making process, EU Council, multilateral regional cooperation, voting behavior, power sources, culture of consensus, positioning, conflict dimensions.

The present thesis aims to analyze Romania's behavior as EU member state from the point of view of power sources as well as effective power of influence. The research focuses on Romania's behavior in the Council, considering that the Council's predominantly intergovernmental character offers the proper framework for observing and analyzing Romania's behavior towards the other EU member states.

The research developed in this sense is based on a theoretical framework regarding the decision-making process in the Council, as the main institution of decision-making at European level and the process of alliance formation in the European Union. The study is structured in four chapters and follows a cascade approach, running from the European level (general level) to the national level (specific level).

The first chapter aims to present the decision-making mechanism at the level of the EU Council and a series of introductory elements regarding the process of alliance building. The EU's decision-making system has gone through substantial transformations and adaptations over time, the EU being in a continuous search for modeling its institutional and decisional design according to the new realities of the European space. The multiplication of national actors, as well as their heterogeneity, the increased number and importance of community policies in the member states' national space, the presence of variable levels of economic development inside the Union, the globalization process, the external factors determined by the global reorganization and by the Union's constant need of repositioning itself on the world stage and last but not least, the evolution of research methods and the refinement of theoretical models of governance have all favored a continuous trend towards re-formation and transformation. Understanding the evolution of the decision-making process, of the current functioning mechanism as well as of the implications of the most recent legislative modification brought by the Lisbon Treaty contributes

to better framing the behavior of state actors, by clearly revealing the environment and parameters within which it is manifested.

In this regard, the first part of Chapter I presents the evolution of the decision-making process in the Council, with a special focus on the innovations introduced by the Treaty of Lisbon.

The second part of Chapter I aims to address the dynamics of the functioning of the Council, based on the two distinct theoretical approaches of rationalism and respectively, constructivism, through the different models of interaction noticeable among the EU member states as well as through the culture of consensus, as an intrinsic characteristics of the European decision-making process. The paper discusses the two dimensions of the decision-making process – vertical and horizontal – as well as the different stages of the decision-making process, with direct relevance to the evolution of member states' behavior along the decision-making channel in the Council. The part dedicated to the models of interaction among the EU member states presents the main existing researches that try to organize the different models identified in practice. Among these models, the compromise model is considered to reflect best the decision-making process in the Council, having thus a strong influence on the national actors' behavior and anticipating very closely the result of negotiations. The culture of consensus is analyzed primarily from the point of view of possible explanations, of potential effects of the enlargement process and of the impact it may have on the member states' tendencies to oppose a certain decision as well as on the process of alliance formation.

The enlargement of the Union has brought along each time, the need to reorganize the decision-making process so that it continued to function normally following the increase in the number of member states. View that the last wave of enlargement – of 2004 and 2007 – has implied the accession of 12 new member states, almost doubling the number of EU member states, the different attempts to reform the decision-making system have been accompanied by profound fears regarding the potential of the enlarged Union to function properly. In this context, the part dedicated to the impact of enlargement on the decision-making process in the Council aims to analyze the basis on which these fears had been formulated as well as their accuracy as regards on one hand, the individual behavior of national actors and on the other, the overall functioning of the Council.

The third part of Chapter I presents the main elements contained in literature on the process of alliance formation in the Council. Taking into account the fact that the main impetus for alliance building is an increased chance of success in imposing the position of the members of the respective alliance in negotiations, by cumulating the members' power of influence, an important part of this sub-chapter is dedicated to the analysis of power distribution among EU member states. The analysis mainly addresses the sources of power, the power asymmetries that the heterogeneity and the variability of power sources generate as well as the different modalities to approach these asymmetries. The voting power, as source of the most obvious asymmetry is presented more in detail, with a special emphasis on the member states' relative voting power, on the different indexes used to measure it and on the impact of the successive institutional reforms on the distribution of voting power among the member states.

Maximizing their power of influence represents a strategic objective for the member states in the European negotiations, in view of imposing their preferences in the decision-making process and ensuring that the decisions taken follow the positions and preferences expressed by the respective member states. The process of alliance formation is thus viewed as the expression of a strategic behavior to accumulate power in view of maximizing the alliance members' power of influence. The part dedicated to the process of alliance building aims to analyze the factors leading to alliance formation, the advantages and disadvantages of alliance formation as well as the evolution of alliances along the Council decision-making process.

The alliances that member states form in view of reaching their common objectives may take different shapes, not always very clearly identifiable from the point of view of their characteristics. A relevant distinction though is the one that differentiates between ad-hoc alliances and permanent alliances, according to their duration, objective, level of institutionalization and recurrence of partners. The part dedicated to ad-hoc alliances *versus* permanent alliances aims to capture the specific features of the two forms of cooperation.

Chapter II aims to analyze the member states' strategic orientations and alliances before and after the last enlargement wave, as well as their modification under the influence of globalization and of the economic and financial crisis.

The research on the process of alliance formation in the European Union, in view of identifying a certain degree of stability and recurrence that could contribute to anticipating the member states' behavior and the result of negotiations in the Council, has been hampered by the lack of public information as regards the negotiation process and the voting exercise. Once this information has become available to the general public, researches on the behavior of the member states and their propensity towards alliance formation have considerably multiplied. In this context, the first part of Chapter II presents the main researches on the member states' alignment before and after enlargement. Concretely, the text refers to the behavior of EU member states, with focus on the actors' tendency to vote *for* or *against* a certain legislative act, on the evolution of relative positions along the negotiations and on the behavioral specificities in the case of new member states. The different behavioral characteristics of the actors determine certain conflict dimensions in the positioning of the member states within the European public space. The analysis of the various conflict dimensions noticeable in the interaction of member states in the Council is thus dedicated to the most recurrent lines of conflict, as seen along the geographic dimension, the ideological dimension, the size or the membership duration. Other conflict lines that distinguish between beneficiaries and contributors, Eurosceptic and Europhile members, member states that favor a smaller or a higher level of regulation are considered to derive from the main categories presented above.

In its second part, Chapter II is dedicated to the different forms of multilateral regional cooperation, as the most evident form of intergovernmental cooperation in the European Union. The presentation distinguishes between cooperation initiatives among old member states (i.e. Benelux and the Nordic Cooperation), cooperation initiatives among new member states (i.e. the Visegrad Group and the Baltic Cooperation) and "mixed" initiatives (the Weimar Triangle, the Nordic-Baltic Cooperation). Without all of them being institutionalized, these forms of multilateral cooperation are considered to be viable examples of permanent alliances established among EU member states in view of coordinating their actions for promoting the common interests and preferences of the members. The choice of cooperation initiatives presented is based on the potential of these initiatives to act as alliances, in case of interest convergence of their members as well as on their potential to inspire future similar initiatives.

The third part of Chapter II aims to capture the influence of globalization and the effects of the economic crisis on the EU member states, notably from the point of view of their relative positioning amongst each other, taking into account the fact that the two phenomena determine an implicit re-dimensioning and reorientation of intra-community interactions. The impact of globalization mainly derives from the high level of interdependencies it creates, the challenges linked to the management of globalization bringing in the forefront of discussions the issue of national sovereignty. Globalisation and world competition restraint the national policies' room for manoeuvre, thus strongly intensifying the need for multilateral cooperation, as the proper level to efficiently address global challenges.

As a result of globalization, countries can be exposed to international economic events, the most convincing form of this kind being the financial crises. The financial crisis burst in 2008 is no exception. More than three years after the first signs of the crisis could be felt, the European Union continues to undergo major resistance tests, the member states and the community institutions making considerable efforts in trying to stay united and to identify common solutions to their common problems. The economic and political pressures generated by the economic crisis have determined a new dynamic inside the Union. This allowed for the member states to take, during the last months, a series of decisions that could not have even been imagined before. The decision-making process and the relations among the EU member states have not been though very fluid, the economic crisis accentuating the exacerbation of nationalism and the lack of trust among partners. Divisions were thus further deepened. Beyond a re-positioning of member states amongst each other as well as towards the European Union in general, the crisis has also fuelled the debate on the future of the Union, both in terms of development perspectives and relations among member states.

Chapter III aims to analyze Romania's behavior in the European Union. Romania's influence on the European decision-making process, just like that of any other member state, is neither implicit, nor immediate or guaranteed. Developing a strategic, coherent and long-term approach towards improving the use of the influence potential is needed. The starting point in analyzing Romania's behavior in the EU is represented by the analysis of power sources, according to the theoretical framework that distinguishes among structural, behavioral and mixed sources. The

behavior of a state is not a strict mathematical function of power sources integration, the analysis also taking into account Romania's specificity as a new member state.

The analysis of power sources is corroborated with the analysis of voting behavior, with a view to identify the terms in which the potential influence is effectively used in the Council decision-making process. The analysis of voting behavior is based on the information contained in the Council's monthly reports on legislative and other adopted acts. The instances considered relevant relate to negative votes, abstentions and declarations, as expressions of an opposing behavior. The reference period runs from accession (January 2007) until October 2012 and captures Romania's voting behavior during ten EU Presidencies. The analysis of voting behavior distinguishes between the negative votes, abstentions and declarations formulated on the legislative acts adopted and the negative votes, abstentions and declarations on other acts. The main objective is to capture Romania's voting behavior both in absolute and relative terms, through comparison with other member states. A special emphasis is put, for obvious reasons, on the comparison with the other new EU member states. The analysis stops at the end of October 2011, because of the unavailability of further public information at the moment of the analysis.

The survey on Romania's behavior and on the process of coordinating its national position with that of other member states, developed in the second part of the chapter, aims to overcome the deficiencies proper to the analysis of the vote that captures only the final picture of legislative adoption, without taking into account the evolution of the behavior throughout the negotiation process. The survey is based on a questionnaire implemented on a focus group considered relevant among the persons responsible for formulating and representing Romania's national position in the Council negotiations. The survey has been applied on a number of 20 persons comprising representatives of the Department of European affairs / the Ministry of European Affairs, of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and of Romania's Permanent Representation to the European Union. The main objective is to identify existing cooperation initiatives with other member states and the respective member states. Complementarily, the survey aims to reveal the selection criteria used for identifying possible partners, the reasons that stimulate cooperation as well as the importance granted to cooperation initiatives with other member states.

Chapter IV presents the conclusions of the survey, both distinctively from the point of view of the sources of power, the voting behavior and Romania's general behavior in the European Union as well as from the point of view of certain defining elements that could project the future evolution of Romania's behavior in the European negotiations.

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