

BABEȘ-BOLYAI UNIVERSITY, CLUJ-NAPOCA

Doctoral School of International Relations and Security Studies

HABILITATION THESIS

# **The Reconstruction of the International System**

Abstract

Candidate:

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September 2024

# ABSTRACT

The habilitation thesis titled "The Reconstruction of the International System" supports my candidacy to become a PhD supervisor within the Doctoral School of International Relations and Security Studies at Babeş-Bolyai University in Cluj-Napoca. This candidacy is based on two decades (2004-2024) of academic activity focused on research and teaching in the field of International Relations and European Studies. A graduate of the Faculty of History and Philosophy at the same university, I continued my specialization in international studies, earning a master's degree in International Relations and European Affairs Management (in English) and a PhD in International Relations and European Studies, awarded with the distinction *Suma Cum Laude*, in 2009.

The first part of the thesis explores academic and professional achievements, focusing on my contributions to the theoretical field of international relations and European studies. My scientific achievements can be grouped into four major areas: (a) Theories and contributions in International Relations, (b) The international system and security policies, (c) Negotiations for (re)defining the balance of power in the international system, and (d) The European Union: institutional and political manifestations. In my research, I start from the premise that "actors interact within an anarchic international system, attempting either to achieve a compromise equilibrium or a position of normative power." At the beginning of my research, I critically reevaluated David Mitrany's functionalist theory in the context of current international crises. My theoretical analysis expanded toward the English School and the Copenhagen School to facilitate the understanding and interpretation of contemporary challenges, such as the securitization of migration or the economic sanctions imposed on Russia following the war in Ukraine. My research also explores the balance of power in the international system and the negotiations regarding its redefinition, highlighting how recent geopolitical changes have reshaped interactions between states and international organizations.

In addition to these theoretical contributions, the habilitation thesis emphasizes my concerns regarding the role of the European Union in the redefinition of the international system, particularly concerning European citizenship and the Union's enlargement. My

research has focused not only on the institutional dimension of the European Union but also on how Romania has integrated and evolved within this framework. I have also investigated the impact of political and legal decisions on European citizenship and how the Union manages crises in its neighbourhood.

My academic achievements extend beyond research, including intensive teaching activities. As a professor and supervisor of undergraduate and master's theses, I have contributed to curriculum development in International Relations and European Studies and have guided students at all levels. I have coordinated collective volumes and have been involved in academic evaluation processes and academic representation activities. Furthermore, my professional activity has extended beyond the academic environment, involving consultancy in international relations and active participation in international conferences.

The second part of the thesis outlines future directions for research and professional development. My research plans focus on three principal axes: the transformations of the international system, the role of the European Union as a global actor, and the balance between security and individual freedoms. The international system is undergoing continuous transformation, and the global balance of power has significantly shifted in recent decades. The traditional hegemony of Western powers is being challenged by emerging actors such as China and Russia, who claim a more prominent role in the global order. Future research will explore these dynamics of change and propose new ways of understanding the reconfiguration of power in the international system, considering projects such as China's "Belt and Road" and Russia's hybrid military strategies.

The European Union, a fervent promoter of democratic values, the rule of law, and human rights, faces multiple challenges that question its cohesion and effectiveness as a global actor. My research will analyse the impact of populism on the EU's foreign policy and how internal fragmentation affects its capacity to act as a unitary force. The Union's enlargement, which has long been a tool for stabilization and democratization, has stalled due to geopolitical tensions in its neighbourhood, and future research will explore how the Union can adapt its enlargement and neighbourhood policies to counter authoritarian influence in these regions.

Another essential research area will be the balance between security and individual freedoms, a central theme in the context of globalization and global crises. States' measures to counter terrorist threats, health crises, or migration have raised important dilemmas regarding how national security can be protected without compromising citizens'

fundamental rights and freedoms. My future research will analyze these aspects and propose solutions to ensure a balance between security and freedom.

Through this candidacy, I aim to continue my scientific activity and contribute to the formation of a new generation of researchers in international relations. The proposed research directions will address contemporary challenges in the context of a constantly changing international order and create a facilitative framework for developing relevant research projects with both theoretical and practical impact.

Consequently, the habilitation thesis not only synthesises my past achievements but also offers a concept for the future of research in international relations. It suggests an integrated and creative approach to the challenges facing the international system and uses adapted research methodologies to develop collaborations with academic communities from other European countries. The construction of a well-defined institutional and methodological framework provides an additional opportunity for the younger generation of researchers to grow and deliver suitable outcomes in the field of international relations.