

Power realism versus normative institutionalism in the Council of Europe

The responses of the Organisation to the political and legal challenges to effective multilateralism

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Doctoral dissertation - Brief summary

The context of the current research is the crisis of the multilateral framework, since scepticism of effective multilateralism has been growing in recent years. The thesis focuses on the particular situation of the Council of Europe, and intends to examine the correlation between the soft power human rights instruments, the “normative institutionalism” and the classical, “power” realism. The dissertation aims to present one political (suspension of voting rights of the Russian parliamentary delegation in the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe) and one legal case study (reluctant implementation of the judgement of the European Court of Human Rights) to illustrate the political and legal difficulties the Council of Europe faces. After a qualitative analysis I seek an answer to the question, how the organisation can solve the challenges resulting from the reappearance of power realism in an intergovernmental organisation with the protection of human rights as a core mission. How, in other words, to solve its own Copenhagen dilemma.

The concrete research questions are as follows: 1) *“Could the recent political and legal challenges to effective multilateralism endanger the functioning of the Council of Europe in the long run?”* 2) *Could normative institutionalism prevail over the great powers’ geopolitical interests, and if so, to what extent?”*

The thesis also intends to examine the enlargement dilemma of the organisation in the mid-nineties, whether to invite the Eastern European countries to join before they were in compliance with the main standards or to delay their accession until their legal and institutional structures were closer to European standards. This Chapter is highly relevant for the initial hypothesis, which is that the Eastern enlargement with the accession of the Russian Federation as a great power largely contributed to the political and legal challenges of the Council of Europe.

The way I intend to conduct the research is partly based on my personal experiences in 1999 and between 2011 and 2016 in the Council of Europe, when I served in Strasbourg, as deputy to the Permanent Representative of Hungary to the Council of Europe. In this capacity I actively participated in the work of four rapporteur groups preparing the decision-making process of the Committee of Ministers and in the Human Rights (DH) sessions of the Ministers' Deputies responsible for the supervision of the execution of the Strasbourg Court's judgements. I also followed the activity of the Parliamentary Assembly in recent years, between 2016 and 2020. In addition, I am currently the Hungarian delegate in two institutions of the Council of Europe, the Steering Committee on Anti-Discrimination, Diversity and Inclusion (CDADI) and in the Governing Board of the Observatory on History Teaching. I also build on the evaluations of the semi-structured interviews with high-ranking officials of the Council of Europe and of the Hungarian foreign service. As the sources are very limited, there is no academic literature analysing these developments, the interviews with competent officials are of utmost importance. The list of interviewees covers different nationals of the Council of Europe working in the structure of the Committee of Ministers and the Parliamentary Assembly on the one hand, politicians of the Parliamentary Assembly and high ranking diplomats of the Hungarian foreign service on the other. It should be also noted that the structure of the thesis was determined in 2020, long before the war between the Russian Federation and Ukraine. However, this war in a neighbouring state has had a major impact on this research, therefore the exclusion of the Russian Federation from the Council of Europe, and its assessment will form an integral part of this research.

Based on the conclusions of the thesis, the followings could be the new scientific results:

- Contribution to the general literature focusing on the future role of multilateral organisations;
- Providing a comprehensive analysis of the impact of political developments in the Council of Europe to the scientific literature;
- Chance to be the first to analyse the new complementary joint procedure;
- Based on the findings concerning their efficiency and capacity, the thesis could contribute to evaluating the role and opportunities of multilateral organisations, especially the Council of Europe;
- The conclusions of the research could assist the actions of the diplomacy in multilateral frameworks, contribute to fine-tuning the general perception of manoeuvring room in multilateral diplomacy.