# STUDYING INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS

# Applying Contingency Theory to International Organizations: The Case of European Integration

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*This article presents the first application of contingency theory, a branch of managerial organizational studies, to the study of international organizations. It takes the EU as its case study, presents it as an organization, and sheds light on the relationship between the structure of this organization and certain contingencies such as environment, size, strategy, and technology.*

**Introduction**

The universal applicability of the concept of organization is a tempting and recurring theme in social sciences. For example, Clegg, a sociologist and organizational theorist, contends:

> Today, no one can pretend to understand the human condition that does not understand the organizations in which it is constituted, constrained, and transformed. Organization studies should be at the core of the study of the human condition, because without such subject matter . . . we would have nothing of any consequence to discuss (Clegg, 2002, xvii).

However, "The relation between general organization theory and the study of international organization has largely been one of mutual neglect" (Jönsson, 1986:39). This article hopes to make a modest contribution to remedying this neglect by applying a branch of managerial organizational studies (OS), contingency theory (CT), to the study of international organizations.

In the modern sense, OS appeared in the 1940s and branched off into specialized areas. It is a convention to divide OS into two main branches: organizational behavior (OB) and organizational theory (OT). The former examines individual and group actions in organizations, while the latter takes up organizations as a whole.

**Table 1: Branches of Organizational Studies**

| BRANCH | LEVEL | SUBJECT |
|---|---|---|
| ORGANIZATIONAL BEHAVIOR | Micro Level | Individual and group dynamics in organizations |
| ORGANIZATIONAL THEORY | Macro Level | Organizations as a whole, their adaptation processes, strategies and structures |

The vast majority of the OS literature remained within the confines of management studies. By the 1960s, political scientists had started to discuss intraorganizational power relations and decision making in governmental organizations (Starbuck, 2005:174), but this promising start did not lead to a political school of thought in OS. The few references to politics remained singular and idiosyncratic (i.e., Böhm, 2006:3). OS scholars with an interest in politics have usually had a predilection for decision-making discourse with an emphasis on motivations, strategies, and choices, and this brought them closer to the OB branch (i.e., Moe, 1991).

Studies from OB have already appeared in the EU studies literature (i.e., Egeberg, 2001–02). However, it seems that none of the perspectives of OT have been applied to the European integration phenomenon yet. It is an interesting coincidence that, just as the scholars of EU studies, OT scholars disagree on the nature of their subject matter; in the face of the sheer size and complexity of the organization phenomenon, they use the same metaphor of "the blind men and the elephant" (Hatch, 1997:7) to describe their predicament, as Puchala (1972) did in the field of European studies. This problem of relativity in the ontology of the concept of organization in OT also appears to be an advantage in the sense that it may be worth exploring the possibilities of employing this concept in different fields (such as EU studies) other than managerial studies.

Several perspectives are included under the OT umbrella (see Astley and Van de Ven, 1983). CT belongs to the organizational design (OD) perspective. OD is based on the claim that the effectiveness of an organization depends on the fit between the organization's components and changes in the environment. Especially with its SARFIT (Structural Adaptation to Regain Fit) model, CT seems to have the potential to be employed in the field of politics in general and in studying international organizations in particular. The present article endeavors to demonstrate this potential. The following title introduces CT as it is employed in managerial studies. Finally, CT is applied to the case of European integration.

**Contingency Theory**

CT is based on the idea that a fit between certain components of a managerial organization and certain contingencies will improve that organization's performance. Among these, the structure of the organization is perhaps most frequently related to contingencies. For this reason, the term "contingency theory" usually refers to "structural contingency theory." The contingencies usually related to the structure of the organization are environment, organizational size, strategy, and technology. CT assumes that each of these contingencies necessitates the existence of certain characteristics in the structure. When the structure of an organization bears those characteristics for the contingency in question, this means that there is a fit. This fit is supposed to increase the performance of the organization. The structural characteristics these contingencies necessitate are as follows:

*Environment*

The rate of technological and market change in the environment of the organization is an important factor in whether the structure of the organization is mechanistic (hierarchical) or organic (participatory). In mechanistic structures, the task of the organization is divided into specialized roles, the occupants of which depend on their subordinates that retain the knowledge and information; in organic structures, members collaborate in fluid and ad hoc ways. Stable environments fit mechanistic structures, since hierarchies are more efficient for routine operations. In unstable environments, organic structures are more suitable, since knowledge and information are required from the lower levels for innovation.

**Table 2a: Cases of fit and misfit between the environment contingency and the hierarchy characteristic of the structure**

| HIERARCHY CHARACTERISTIC OF THE STRUCTURE | ENVIRONMENT CONTINGENCY | |
|---|---|---|
| | Stable | Unstable |
| **Mechanistic (Hierarchical)** | FIT | MISFIT |
| **Organic (Participatory)** | MISFIT | FIT |

Derived from Donaldson (2001:2–3 and 2006:22).

*Size*

The size of the organization affects the degree of bureaucracy in that organization. Bureaucratic structures fit large organizations. In large organizations, operations and administration

are repetitive. A decision-making procedure based on rules brings efficiency and cost effectiveness. Small organizations, in contrast, need unbureaucratic, simple structures that are centralized and not rule governed.

**Table 2b: Cases of fit and misfit between the size contingency and the bureaucracy characteristic of the structure**

| BUREAUCRACY CHARACTERISTIC OF THE STRUCTURE | SIZE CONTINGENCY | |
|---|---|---|
| | Large | Small |
| **Bureaucratic** | FIT | MISFIT |
| **Unbureaucratic** | MISFIT | FIT |

Derived from Donaldson (2001:2–3 and 2006:22).

*Strategy*

A functional structure based on the existence of such departments as production and marketing fits an undiversified strategy. In this case, the organization can specialize in a variety of products or services. In contrast, an organization that follows a diversified strategy should prefer a divisional structure, each division being responsible for one product or service. If new products or services are introduced and assigned to the new divisions in this process, the process is called "epigenesis." If the original products or services are attached to the new divisions, the process is named "differentiation" (Etzioni, 1963:408–09. See also Cutler, 2006).

**Table 2c: Cases of fit and misfit between the strategy contingency and the divisionalisation characteristic of the structure**

| DIVISIONALISATION CHARACTERISTIC OF THE STRUCTURE | STRATEGY CONTINGENCY | |
|---|---|---|
| | Diversified | Undiversified |
| **Divisional** | FIT | MISFIT |
| **Functional** | MISFIT | FIT |

Derived from Donaldson (2001:2–3 and 2006:22).

*Technology*

A mechanistic (hierarchical) structure fits routine technological processes, and an organic (participatory) structure fits non-routine processes.

**Table 2d: Cases of fit and misfit between the technology contingency and the hierarchy characteristic of the structure**

| HIERARCHY CHARACTERISTIC OF THE STRUCTURE | TECHNOLOGY CONTINGENCY | |
|---|---|---|
| | Routine | Non-routine |
| **Mechanistic (Hierarchical)** | FIT | MISFIT |
| **Organic (Participatory)** | MISFIT | FIT |

Derived from Donaldson (2001:2–3 and 2006:22).

There are two classical models in CT (see Hrebiniak and Joyce, 1985, for an alternative framework based on four models). These two models are the policy determinism (or the maximum choice) model and the contingency determinism (or the minimum choice) model.

The policy determinism model (see, for example, Child, 1972) is based on the idea that the structural adaptation of an organization is determined by the policies pursued by the dominant coalition in the organization, together with minimal effects from contingencies. The dominant coalition is the group with power over the organization (Donaldson, 1987:20).

The policies formulated by the dominant coalition aim at, among other concerns, capturing a fit between the structure of the organization and the contingencies. It is sometimes possible for the dominant coalition to change the contingencies themselves.

The contingency determinism model (i.e., Hannan and Freeman, 1977), however, maintains that the structural adaptation is determined for the most part by the pressures exerted by certain contingencies. Here, the contingency factors shape the organizational structure directly and one-sidedly.

SARFIT, a third and alternative model within CT, has been elaborated by Donaldson since the second half of the 1980s. Like contingency determinism, SARFIT is based on the primacy of the contingency factors with minimal influence from policies. However, SARFIT identifies an alternating series of fit and misfit between the structure and the contingencies, and thus a continuous process of adaptation. The element of adaptation in CT should not lead the reader to think that CT is based on the adaptive systems approach. CT is not a systemic model; it examines how individual components contribute to fit. The adaptive systems approach was already applied to European integration as early as 1970 by Lindberg and Scheingold (1970).

**Table 3: Summarizes the characteristics of the three models of CT**

| | | MODELS | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | **Policy Determinism** | **Contingency Determinism** | **SARFIT** |
| **ASPECT** | **Ultimate cause of structure** | Contingencies and preferences of dominant coalition | Contingencies | Contingencies |
| | **Immediate cause of structural change** | Misfit and preferences of dominant coalition | Change in contingencies | Misfit of structure to contingencies |
| | **Effect of misfit on structural adjustment to regain fit moderated by environmental illiberality** | Considerable | Not applicable | Considerable |
| | **Response to pressure regain fit** | Structure adjusted to contingencies or contingencies adjusted to structure | No concept of fit | Structure adjusted to contingencies |
| | **Degree of choice by dominant coalition** | High | Nil | Limited |

Adapted from Donaldson (1987, 20)

The following section examines in more detail the three models presented in Table 3, and applies them to the case of European integration.

**CT Applied to European Integration**

Unconventional tools may open up new possibilities for European studies. Manners argues that "contemporary European studies requires convincing cross-disciplinary narratives for the health and well-being of both European area studies and the contributing disciplines" (Manners, 2003:68). Manners' argument resonates with that of Tsoukalis:

> The process of integration by itself defies the rigid boundaries which have become established between different disciplines, such as politics, economics, and history. . . . Integration theory has run into the ground, probably because we have been slow in realizing that this new and complex phenomenon could not be studied by our conventional tools of analysis (Tsoukalis, 1980:215).

CT may be one of the novel and "convincing cross-disciplinary narratives" in European studies. To be able to apply CT to European integration, we first have to redefine the basic concepts of CT for the case of the EU.

*Organization*

The definition of the concept of organization in the CT literature is comprehensive and flexible enough to apply to the EU phenomenon: "An organization . . . is any social system that comprises the coordinated action of two or more people toward attaining an objective. Organizations are purposeful systems" (Donaldson, 1985:7). It is not difficult to see the EU as a social system. This system has been transformed radically from its initial state introduced by the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC) in 1951 and continued its life as a conglomerate with the addition of the European Economic Community (EEC) and European Atomic Energy Community (EURATOM), before reaching its current form as the EU. As an organization, it comprises the coordinated action of not only many individuals but also of a multitude of entities ranging from its own institutions to member states or transnational bodies. Depending on one's theoretical perspective, several possible objectives may be conceived for this organization, such as serving the economic and commercial interests of the member states (the Liberal Intergovernmentalist view) or its transformation into a pseudo-federal state (the Federalist view). All these objectives remain within the scope of CT's definition of organization.

*Structure*

The institutional structure of the EU contains all the structural characteristics described by CT. An emphasis on such intergovernmental institutions as the Council of Ministers or the European Council with their members that depend on the knowledge of their subordinates will highlight the organic (participatory) characteristics. In contrast, focusing on the European Commission (many of its members have specialized roles) will emphasize the mechanistic (hierarchical) characteristics. Drawing attention to the infamously cumbersome administrative mechanisms of the European Commission will bring its bureaucratic characteristics to the fore. An emphasis on the initial institutional structure of the EEC, which was dedicated to the sole aim of creating and maintaining an economic community where each institution had a complementary function to that of another, will render the functional characteristics more visible. On the other hand, accentuating the creation of new bodies or systems with specific functions for the new dimensions added to the EU in later years, such as the directorate-general for home affairs or European System of Central Banks, will bring divisional characteristics to the fore. According to CT, the structure of the EU is shaped by either the dominant coalition or contingencies. The influence and characteristics of other institutions of the EU, such as the Court of Justice or the European Parliament (EP), are not considered essential by CT.

*Dominant Coalition*

Dominant coalition refers to those who have the potential to determine organizational goals and to change its structural characteristics. Depending on the term in question, as well as on one's theoretical perspective, the dominant coalition may comprise various individuals, groups, or institutions such as the founding fathers, presidents of the European Commission, and unique configurations such as the Convention on the Future of Europe. Even non-European actors such as the U.S. that, from time to time, become influential in shaping the organizational structure of Europe as well as on contingencies (for an advanced theoretical examination of

the concept of "exogenous, demand creating actor" influencing regional integration (Alker, 1973:344–56).

*Strategy*
The initial strategy of creating and maintaining an economic community, which has been the main driving force behind European integration, is an undiversified strategy. Adding new dimensions to this initial strategy in such fields as foreign and security policy or justice and home affairs is considered strategic diversification.

*Technology*
Technology is the production, knowledge, and usage of the methods, processes, or systems employed by the EU as an organization.

*Environment*
In the case of European integration, the environment refers to the social, economic, and security conditions at the continental and global level.

*Size*
Size refers to the geographical coverage of the EU, as well as the scope of the competences of the EU.

*Performance*
Performance is the recognized accomplishments of the EU in the areas that fall into its domain of competences.

In the case of European integration, CT is grounded on the assumption that a fit between certain components of the EU as an organization, such as structure, strategy, or technology, and certain contingencies, such as the EU's size and environment, has had and will continue to have considerable influence on its performance.

In the following section, the three models of CT, namely policy determinism, contingency determinism, and SARFIT are first explained in their original form. Second, a hypothesis is developed for each of them in relation to their application to the European integration phenomenon. Third, selected cases from European integration are presented to support that hypothesis.

*Policy Determinism*
Etzioni (1963) was one of the first authors who theorized on organizations, the structure altered by a dominant coalition in response to certain contingencies. The contingency he took into consideration was size although he did not name it as such or categorize it as a contingency explicitly (p. 415). He did not include the concept of fit in his analysis either. Although Etzioni examined international organizations and had many references to the EEC in this work, the policy determinism model of CT had to wait for managerial theorists to develop in full.

Almost a decade later, Child (1972:13) suggested that senior executives in a firm may have the discretion to influence the structure of their organization to a considerable extent. He elaborated on the theme of a strong organization whose potential makes it possible to absorb the negative effects of the misfit between structure and contingencies, and whose executives have a large leeway. The main aim of the executives, in this context, is to adjust the structure to the contingencies. If possible, the executives could also adjust the contingencies to the structure of their organization. This view was later developed to include, besides the senior executives, the whole board of directors, investors/shareholders, and other stakeholders from employees to communities.

The following hypothesis may be put forward as an application of the policy determinism model to the case of European integration.

*Hypothesis I—When the dominant coalition identifies a misfit between the governance structure of the EU and contingencies, a structural change is realized in the short term as result of*

*the preferences of the dominant coalition as well as the misfit. In the long term, contingencies and the preferences of the dominant coalition give the structure its ultimate form.*

In the context of international relations, the policy determinism model is the depiction of those infrequent cases where policy makers are able to adjust the structure of their organization to contingencies, or contingencies to the structure of the organization. It is difficult to explain the whole of the process of European integration by using this model, because there has not been a single dominant coalition with total power over the integration process. In some critical periods of the history of European integration, there were some misfits the respective dominant coalition could identify and was powerful enough to act accordingly. Thus, it is more suitable to speak of an "issue-specific power" (see Jönsson, 1981:296) wielded by the dominant coalition. For example, the post-war restructuring of Europe, with the initiation of European integration itself, was the creation of an organizational structure on the continent that would fit the new contingencies. There were a few contingency factors in the minds of the dominant coalition that contributed to the establishment of the European Communities.

The opposition between France and Germany was an important contingency factor for Jean Monnet: "His proposition to pool Franco-German coal and steel industries was specifically addressed to the German problem. For him, the immediately critical issue in the spring of 1950 was . . . the revival of a Germany whose allegiance to the West, and to France in particular, continued to be in the balance" (Schwabe, 2001:24).

The Schuman Declaration formulated by Monnet includes the following: "The coming together of the nations of Europe requires the elimination of the age-old opposition of France and Germany. Any action taken must in the first place concern these two countries" (European Commission, 2008).

The Soviet threat was also an important factor: The creation of Cominform in 1947, the Prague coup in 1948, and the Berlin blockade in 1949 were alarming developments.

Interestingly, the U.S. was included in the dominant coalition. With the initiation of the European Recovery Program in 1947, the environment contingency was changed, and with the establishment of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, the organizational structure of the continent was redefined. The Soviet Union was an important source of military and ideological threat, a part of the environment contingency rather than a member of the dominant coalition:

> [T]he perceived Communist threat was an important but not the only motivating force behind America's endorsement of a unified Europe. The other motif . . . independently of, although not unrelated to, the Cold War was the American aim to contain a renascent Germany. It was this purpose . . . that determined the American long-term option for a supranational structure for an integrated Europe after the founding of the Federal Republic of Germany (Schwabe, 2001:18).

The change in the value of Germany, as a contingency factor in the eyes of both France and the U.S., from hostility to cooperation must have been facilitated by Germany's own outlook for the future. It is highly probable that Adenauer thought the Schuman Plan would rehabilitate the economy, restore the country's legitimacy in the eyes of the world, strengthen its alliances, and end the allied administration of the Ruhr district. However, as the policy determinism model suggests, a change in the value of the contingencies usually necessitates power on the part of policy-makers. In Germany's case, this powerful policy-maker figure was once again the U.S.:

> [The initialing of the Schuman Plan on 19 March 1951] would not have been possible without U.S. pressure. . . . When the Germans balked, U.S. High Commissioner John McCloy threatened that if the Germans scuttled the Schuman Plan, he would impose even tougher anti-cartel measures. That did it. A European newsman covering the ceremony said: "If Europe is ever unified in our lifetime, it will be because of Washington—or Moscow" (Time, 1951).

The Pleven Plan devised in 1950 by René Pleven, French premier at the time, can be cited as another characteristic example of policy determinism. In response to environmental contingencies, the plan proposed "the creation . . . of a European army tied to political institutions of a united Europe":

> The French Government believed, if the coal and steel plan succeeded, people would become more used to the idea of a European Community before the extremely delicate issue of common defense was approached. World events leave it no option. Therefore, confident as it is that Europe's destiny lies in peace and convinced that all the peoples of Europe need a sense of collective security, the French Government proposes to resolve this issue by the same methods and in the same spirit (European Navigator, 2008).

The plan led to the signing of a treaty among West Germany, France, Italy, and the Benelux countries in 1952. This treaty would create a European Defence Community (EDC). However, "in its insistence that members surrender sovereignty over all of their armed forces in Europe in pursuit of *fusion complète*, the EDC Treaty represented a fundamental departure from the original Pleven Plan" (Ruane, 2000:15). The treaty was abandoned when it failed to obtain ratification in the French Parliament. The treaty had been prepared on the assumption that a supranational structure was better than an intergovernmental one in coping with the unstable atmosphere of the time. As indicated in Table 2a, the CT view posits that hierarchical structures fit stable environments. Thus, had the EDC been established, there would have been a misfit between its supranational/hierarchical structure and the unstable environment; its abandonment is therefore understandable from the CT perspective.

In the next decade, the Hague Summit of 1969 attempted to achieve a fit between the strategy contingency (diversification) and the divisionalization characteristic of the structure; the community had started using economic instruments for foreign policy purposes in the 1960s, and a foreign policy dimension had been added de facto to the agenda of the community. Now, a new procedure, which would later become the European Political Cooperation, was initiated to control this dimension. Since the foreign conduct of policy was already in the agenda of the community, this process was not an epigenesis but a differentiation.

In the following years, influential presidents of the European Commission, such as Delors, implemented some important structural reforms. In his two consecutive terms as European Commission president, a radical and large-scale restructuration project was realized. He favored a diversified strategy with new initiatives such as a monetary union, a common foreign and security policy, and cooperation in justice and home affairs. These dimensions were necessitated by the changing socioeconomic contingencies that required a stronger role for the community in economic and political terms after a period of dormancy in the 1970s. To fit this diversified strategy, a divisional structure based on the European System of Central Banks was established, and the three-pillar structure of the Maastricht Treaty was introduced. In this structure, the creation of the Justice and Home Affairs was an epigenetic process.

The European Council can be an illustrative case for the board of directors configuration of the managerial version of policy determinism. For example, the communiqué of the meeting of Heads of State or Government of the Member States at The Hague (1 and 2 December 1969) states:

> [the Heads of State or Government and the Ministers for Foreign Affairs of the Member States of the European Communities] were unanimous in their opinion that by reason of the progress made, the Community has now arrived at a turning point in its history. Over and above the technical and legal sides of the problems involved, . . . entry upon the final stage of the Common Market . . . means paving the way for a united Europe capable of assuming its responsibilities in the world of tomorrow and of making a contribution commensurate with its traditions and its mission (Hill and Smith, 2000:72).

The communiqué also informs us that the heads of state and of government decided to "instruct the Ministers of Foreign Affairs to study the best way of achieving progress in the matter of political unification" (Hill,Smith, 2000:74). Whereas the entry upon the final stage of the Common Market was an elaboration on the original functional structure of the community, considerations on political unification is understood as an attempt to proceed with a diversified strategy and a suitable structure.

*Contingency Determinism*

Several writers (see, for example, Burns and Stalker, 1961; Chandler, 1962; Woodward, 1965; Lawrence and Lorsch, 1967; and Blau, 1972) have claimed that changes in contingencies give rise to a set of pressures to which the structure must adapt in the long run. In this process, as the role of policy making or choice is minimized the organization has no other option but to adopt centralized or bureaucratic structures that lack participatory or democratic features (Donaldson, 1987:2; 2001:9; and 132). Contingency determinism is the definition of extreme situations where contingencies directly and solely determine the structure, and the concepts of fit and misfit remain irrelevant.

Regarding the case of European integration, the contingency determinism model may be expressed in the following hypothesis.

*Hypothesis II—The main factors that bring about structural changes in European integration are contingencies. The preferences of the dominant coalition have a minimal effect, and the concepts of "fit" and "misfit" remain irrelevant. The effect of the contingencies increases the relative importance of the centralized and bureaucratic elements in the structure of the EU.*

The contingency determinism model is the opposite pole of the policy determinism model; whereas policy determinism sees European integration as steered by the dominant coalition, contingency determinism depicts a Europe that drifts along the river of contingencies with those at the helm having almost no control over the course. Again, it would be far-fetched to claim that the whole process of European integration has been due to contingencies. However, it is possible to see the weight of contingencies more in some periods than in others. For instance, a plausible argument may be made that the environment contingency was substantially influential in the formative years of the European Communities. The textbook narrative of the origins of European integration highlights the influence of such factors as the insecure atmosphere, the need for economic restructuration, and the Soviet threat in the post-World War.

The idea of the technology contingency having an influence on European integration is not new. Mitrany's (1943; 1948; 1965; 197; 1975) functionalist approach is an early example of this. He foresees a new world order composed of a web of transnational institutions. Each of these institutions is specialized in a function such as railway transportation or shipping. The key point here is that the nature of the function determines the structure of the institutions as well as the necessary action and powers. There is no predetermined scheme or political decision-making machinery in the system; everything is determined by a contingency: technology.

> Here we discover a cardinal virtue of the functional method—what one might call the virtue of technical self-determination. The functional dimensions . . . determine themselves. In a like manner the function determines its appropriate organs. It also reveals through practice the nature of the action required under the given conditions, and in that the powers needed by the respective authority (Mitrany, 1966:72–3).

Farrell and Héritier confirm the importance of technology as an important contingency in functionalist integration. They refer to technological contingencies as external factors: "Under . . . [Mitrany's] account, integration occurs because of external factors (the technical nature of the problems being solved) rather than an internal dynamic within the regional organisation" (Farrell and Héritier, 2005:274).

Although Mitrany saw drastic differences between functionalism and the method of European integration, he was sympathetic to the ECSC and the European Atomic Energy Community. In his opinion, especially in the case of the ECSC, functional solutions were created to problems with a geographical scope (Taylor, 1993:20–1). As the CT expected, the routine functions of the ECSC gave rise to an organizational structure whose core consisted of the high authority that was mechanistic (hierarchical) rather than organic (participatory).

In conformity with the expectations of contingency determinism, functionalism foresees a centralized and technocratic structure. Functionalists interpret integration as "the gradual triumph of the rational and the technocratic over the political" (Pentland, 1981:551).

Milward's interpretation of the formative years of European integration may be a third example of the contingency determinism model. Milward contends "the origins and early evolution of the European Community (EC) were relative and contingent rather than expressive of fundamental principles which might be universal and timeless. Accordingly, the EC came into existence not as part of any grand design" (Burgess, 2000:56–7). In his opinion, the EC

> came into existence to cope with certain historically specific and well-defined economic and political problems and, those problems once resolved, there would be no further momentum from the national interest towards any further stage of economic or political integration. . . . The process of integration is neither a thread woven into the fabric of Europe's political destiny nor one woven into the destiny of all highly developed capitalist nation-states (Milward, 1984:493).

Milward's issue-specific approach fulfills CT's expectation of a fit between a diversified strategy and a divisional structure. The scope of integration achieved in the ECSC was not enough to cope with the problems in Europe at the beginning of the 1950s. Other sectors of the economy, besides coal and steel, had to be addressed as well. This meant a need for diversification, which in turn necessitated a epigenetic divisionalization brought by the establishment of the EEC and EURATOM.

*SARFIT*

The SARFIT model, developed by Donaldson (1987; 200; 2006) is an alternative to the policy determinism and contingency determinism models. This model departs from the enigmatic phenomenon of an organization moving from fit to misfit. The policy determinism and the contingency determinism models of CT are based on a cybernetic understanding of organizations that focuses on deficit reduction; once an organization moves from misfit to fit it is expected to stay there. If the organization falls into misfit again, these two models cannot explain this situation.

> [I]n the SARFIT view, fit and misfit are each temporary states that alternate with each other. An organization in fit tends to expand into misfit, which provokes structural adaptation into fit, which then leads to further expansion into misfit. This cycle repeats itself over time. As the organization moves between fit and misfit so it has resultant higher and lower performance, respectively. Each phase of moving into misfit produces incremental increases in contingency (e.g., size). And each phase of moving into fit produces incremental increases in structure. Thereby, these increments accumulate over time and so tend to eventually produce growth from being a small, local and undiversified organization to being a larger, geographically widespread, and diversified organization (Donaldson, 2006:21).

In explaining the evolving structure of the EU, the SARFIT model is preferable to policy determinism and contingency determinism; whilst the other two models can shed light only on certain periods from the history of the EU, SARFIT can interpret the whole of the integration process.

The section below applies the SARFIT model to European integration for the environment, size, and strategy contingencies (the technology contingency is omitted because of space limitations).

*Hypothesis IIIa—The structure of the EU is initially in fit with the environment; when the environment is unstable, the structure is organic (participatory), and when the environment is stable, the structure is mechanistic (hierarchical). This fit has a positive effect on the performance of the EU, and surplus resources from the fit-based higher performance engender an expansion in the form of geographical enlargement as well as an increase in the scope of the competences of the EU. The expansion means an increase in the value of size as a contingency variable leading the EU into misfit with its existing structure. Mainly under the effect of the contingencies and with a limited discretion by the ruling elite, the structure of the EU achieves a fit with the contingencies once again.*

The still-unstable environment of the aftermath of World War II necessitated an organic (participatory) structure in Europe. Indeed, the first five years of the post-war period in Europe were marked with several rounds of intergovernmental negotiations, and with the establishment of the OEEC and NATO, which were intergovernmental organizations. As peace and stability were established relatively firmly at the beginning of the 1950s, the technical need for the reconstruction and development of Europe pressed for the establishment of a mechanistic (hierarchical) structure. Indeed, in 1951 two supranational authorities emerged in Europe: NATO developed a supranational authority with the formation of SHAPE, and the ECSC was established with its high authority (Etzioni, 1963:413). In itself, the high authority was divided into specialized directorates-general, where high-level officials depended on their subordinates who retained the knowledge and information. With the help of the unique structures of the ECSC and EEC in which the high authority/the commission played a major role, the economic reconstruction of Europe was accomplished—despite some vicissitudes. For example, the period of inactivity in the 1970s and the momentum gained with the Hallstein Commission (1958–67), which confirmed the primacy of European law and which consolidated the Common Agricultural Policy, continued with the Delors Commission (1985–94). However, the commission's role began to change in the early 2000s. In 2003, Nugent described this situation as follows:

> In recent years, the Commission appears to have been a less effective institution than it was in the mid-to-late 1980s when it was leading the march to complete the internal market and was championing such initiatives as EMU and the social dimension. . . . It has become, it is claimed, too reactive in exercising its responsibilities, reactive to the pressures of the many interests to which it is subject, reactive to the immediacy of events, and above all reactive to the increasing number of instructions it receives from the Council of Ministers and the European Council (Nugent, 2003:148).

The instructions from the Council of Ministers and the European Council were indications of a structure becoming more organic (participatory/intergovernmental) once again. The commission was the victim of its own success: by performing its functions effectively, the commission had contributed much to the realization of the economic integration of Europe. Among other things, this made the EU a center of attraction for the Central and Eastern European countries. Now there was a misfit between the organic structure and the stable environment: the massive and problematic fifth enlargement destabilized the environment once more. This created a second misfit with the hierarchical structure and renewed the need for the intergovernmental negotiations for the comprehensive enlargement project.

*Hypotheis IIIb—The structure of the EU is initially in fit with its small (in terms of geographical coverage and its scope of the competences) size, and its structure is unbureaucratic. This fit has a positive effect on the performance of the EU, and surplus resources from the fit-based higher performance entailed an expansion in the form of geographical enlargement as well as an increase in the scope of the competences of the EU. The expansion means an increase in the value of size as a contingency variable leading the EU into misfit with its existing structure. Mainly under the effect of the contingencies and with limited discretion by the ruling elite, the structure of the EU achieves a fit with the contingencies once again.*

The relationship between the size contingency and the bureaucratic characteristic of the structure is exemplified by focusing on the European Commission and its regulation of the internal market. In accordance with the assumptions of the SARFIT model, when the EEC was small, a centralized unbureaucratic structure was more suitable. The commission engineered the internal market on a day-to-day basis by abolishing national rules, policing the emerging single market, and setting minimum standards for those areas affected by deregulation (Christiansen, 2001:101). As the internal market expanded, there occurred a misfit between the size and the unbureaucratic structure of the community.

> [B]y the early 1980s, it became clear that the attempt to harmonize a continuously expanding body of national rules was bound to fail. To overcome the limitations of the old approach that had been based exclusively on harmonization, the 1985 white paper on the completion of the internal market introduced [among other things] the principle of mutual recognition (Majone, 2000).

Under this principle, member states had to allow trade in goods once these goods had been licensed for trade in another member state. This meant a rule-based or bureaucratic structure, and brought about a new fit with the new value of the size contingency.

A second example to support this hypothesis is the bureaucratization of the foreign policy dimension of the EU. Between 1970 and 1990, the core of the bureaucratic machinery working for foreign policy coordination was the Political Committee (PoCo), consisting of political directors, who met on a monthly basis in the capital of the presidency. PoCo meetings were prepared by the various specialized working groups based in Brussels and by junior diplomats, known as the European Correspondents, based in the ministries of foreign affairs. There also was a small, dedicated unit in the Directorate-General External Relations (DGE) of the Council Secretariat, which supported the work of the presidency, as well as a few officials in the European Commission. However, the size of this bureaucracy soon proved to be inadequate. Following the establishment of the European Security and Defense Policy (ESDP) in 1999, several units and practices were introduced at supranational, intergovernmental, and national levels as well as in the chain of command. For instance, a Crisis Management Planning Directorate was established within Directorate-General External Relations, and the Political and Security Committee was formed as an intergovernmental body (Vanhoonacker et al., 2010:7–8, 12). With the establishment of the European External Action Service on 1 December 2010, the foreign policy dimension acquired its own dedicated bureaucracy.

*Hypothesis IIIc—The initial functional structure of the EU is in fit with its undiversified strategy. This fit has a positive effect on the performance of the EU, and surplus resources from the fit-based higher performance bring forth a diversification in its strategy. A misfit occurs between this new value of the strategy contingency and the functional structure. Mainly under the effect of the contingencies and with limited discretion by the ruling elite, the value of the structure of the EU is changed from functional to divisional. The EU achieves a fit once again.*

The relationship between the strategy contingency and the divisionalization characteristic of the structure dictates that a divisional structure fits a diversified strategy whereas a functional structure fits an undiversified strategy. The tailor-made functional structure of the EEC remained in fit with the undiversified strategy of realizing economic integration. The surplus resources from the fit-based higher performance in economic integration produced expansion. Thanks to this expansion, as mentioned above, the community started using the following economic instruments for foreign policy purposes as early as the 1960s. These measures included such measures as conclusion of trade or cooperation agreements or imposition of embargoes or boycotts (Smith 2003:60).

Now, there was an emerging foreign policy besides the existing economic policy. This diversification in the strategy contingency led to a misfit with the functional structure. The resulting poor performance of the EEC in foreign policy in comparison to that of the other

major actors in world politics and relative to its own economic performance gave rise to the criticism that it was an economic giant but political dwarf. The EEC attempted to regain its fit by adjusting its structure to this new value of contingency: in an environment externally conditioned by the end of the Cold War and German unification, the three-pillar structure was introduced with the Treaty on European Union (TEU) in 1992; and the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) constituted the second pillar. As explained above, since foreign policy was already in the agenda of the EU before the creation of the CFSP pillar, this was not an epigenetic process but differentiation.

The surplus resources from the fit-based, higher performance in economic integration caused another fit-misfit cycle in the strategy contingency. The initial success of the EEC attracted a considerable amount of immigration from non-members. The number of foreign workers in nine European countries rose from 2.5 million to 5.4 million between 1960 and 1970 and peaked at 6.3 million in 1973 (Hansen, 1993). Jennissen's analyses (2004) suggest that the main determinant of this increase in immigration is indeed economic performance. This was a new value of the contingency and led to a misfit with the relatively functional structure of the community that was constructed to deal with economic issues. To cope with immigration, the community resorted to a divisionalization in its structure. The Ad Hoc Group on Immigration was established in 1986. Subsequently, immigration issues were included in the third pillar created by the TEU in 1992, and transferred to the first pillar by the Treaty of Amsterdam in 1997. As expected by SARFIT, while the EU gets larger and geographically more widespread, it also becomes more divisional. In line with this expectation, with the Lisbon Treaty signed in 2007, a long-term presidency status was created for the European Council, and a High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy was appointed. The EU's bill of rights, the Charter of Fundamental Rights, was also binding by the treaty. We may expect that if the EU continues to enlarge geographically and to assume new roles further divisionalization will become inevitable.

## Conclusion and Discussion

CT models can serve as frameworks to analyze entities that bear organizational characteristics in international relations. The European integration phenomenon proves to be an illustrative case in this framework. To assess the prospective place of CT in the international organizations literature, the following sections compare CT with relevant theories and fundamental concepts, focus on CT as a tool to assess the validity of certain theories or approaches, and assess the overall contribution of the CT to the study of international organizations.

### *Comparing CT with Relevant Theories and Fundamental Concepts*

When applied to the field of international politics, CT appears to be closely related to certain fundamental debates and theories:

#### THE AGENCY-STRUCTURE DEBATE

This debate centers on the primacy of either structure or agency in the social sciences. In this debate, with the exception of the pure form of policy determinism model, CT stands closer to the camp that believes in the determinative power of the structure (see Table 3); international structure corresponds to the global level of the environment contingency. However, there are substantial issues in CT that remain outside the agency-structure debate. 1) International structure is only half of one of the contingencies (that is the environment contingency) of the CT. The other half (the continental environment) as well as the other contingencies (size, strategy, technology) remain outside the concept of international structure. 2) CT goes beyond determining the primacy of agency or international structure, and tries to relate some structural characteristics (divisionalization, bureaucracy, and hierarchy) of the agency (here the EU) to contingencies. 3) In the agency-structure debate, the structure of the international system mainly imposes behavioral modifications on agencies. Modifications in the structure of

the agency are not considered. This is the case even in neorealism where the influence of the international system on states is a key factor. Some constructivist studies are exceptions to this (i.e., Finnemore 1996).

#### HISTORICAL INSTITUTIONALISM

At first sight, CT is seen as akin to historical institutionalism (HI) in the sense that they both examine and try to identify patterns of large-scale and long-term changes. However, HI and CT differ on a number of grounds. 1) In HI, the institution in question is influenced by exogenous factors such as interstate competition or economic crises. In CT, besides exogenous factors, the organization is also influenced by other contingencies, such as size, strategy, and technology. 2) In some cases, HI studies are long narratives that sacrifice theoretical parsimony. It sometimes becomes difficult to identify the causal relationships hidden in those narratives. CT, however, puts forward concise models and falsifiable statements.

#### NEOFUNCTIONALISM

The SARFIT model of CT and NF bear a resemblance. However, there also are three essential differences between the two. 1) In both, there are mechanisms that enlarge the size of the entity in question and increase its powers. However, these mechanisms are different in the two cases. In NF these mechanisms are positive spillover, transfer of domestic allegiances and technocratic automaticity. In SARFIT, on the other hand, the fit-misfit cycle is at work. 2) Neofunctionalism does not specify an end product for the European integration process, and it is not clear whether there will emerge a federal state, a sui generis structure, or another outcome. SARFIT predicts that the EU will become a diversified organization with an increasing rate of bureaucratization. 3) The external dimension is left out of the Neofunctionalist formula. In this account, European integration proceeds with its own internal dynamics. The environment contingency in CT, on the other hand, includes the international political environment together with the environment in the continent.

### *CT as Tool to Assess the Validity of Certain Theories or Approaches*

If and when a certain theory makes reference to relations between such organizational components as "structure" or "strategy" and such contingencies as environment or size, CT may serve as a touchstone to assess the validity of that reference. Mitrany's functionalism, discussed above, passes this test since its claim of emergence of a hierarchical structure under the effect of routine technological tasks is in accordance with the expectations of CT. So does the approach of Milward to the first years of European integration when it assumes a fit between a diversified strategy and a divisional structure. However, the variant of structural realism formulated by Mearsheimer, for example, would have problems in this regard. Mearsheimer asserts that in the post-war years "the cooperation among the Western democracies"—which we may interpret as a new structural configuration—was due to an environmental contingency: the Cold War (Mearsheimer, 1990). At first, Mearsheimer's reading of the emergence of the EC seems in harmony with the contingency determinism model. The EC, as a new structural value in Europe emerged mainly under the effect of the environment contingency. However, if the post-Cold War period had been as stable as Mearsheimer claims, the EU would have adopted a mechanistic (hierarchical) structure in the field of foreign and security policy. Yet, the foreign and security policy dimension remained intergovernmental in the post-Cold War period.

### *Contribution of the CT to the Study of International Organizations*

CT may bring new opportunities to organizational studies. First, CT sheds light on the relationship between certain components of organizations such as structure, and certain contingencies such as environment, size, strategy, or technology. As such, analyzing the EU in particular or international organizations in general by using CT opens up new dimensions. For example, the following excerpt from a 2007 article may not have special importance at first glance:

> EU diplomats have characterized the style of current Commission President Jose Manuel Barroso as "presidential," with Barroso personally steering Brussels' most important policy dossiers such as energy and the EU Constitution. But the real winner of influence in the post-enlargement Commission is not Barroso himself but the Commission's civil servants apparatus (Beunderman, 2007).

However, a rereading of the same excerpt under the light of CT (in particular, the SARFIT model) reveals that the increase in the value of the size contingency brought about by the fifth enlargement had positive effects on the independence and actorness of the EU. The new value of the environment contingency led the commission to adopt a hierarchical structure rather than one of choice by the dominant coalition (see Table 3). The increase in the size of the EU also brought about an increase in the powers of Eurocrats.

Secondly, CT offers falsifiable hypotheses. It claims that a fit between the structure of an organization and certain contingencies will lead to an increase in the performance of that organization. In particular, the SARFIT model asserts that organizations go through cycles. If all these cycles are completed, with the expected series of fits and misfits between the structure of the organization and contingencies, the organization is expected to become a large, geographically widespread and diversified organization with an increasing rate of bureaucratization. These claims of CT seem to have been validated by a limited number of cases presented here and can be tested across further cases in other works.

Thirdly, as indicated above, CT may serve to assess the validity of theories that refer to relations between such organizational components as structure, strategy, or technology, and such contingencies as environment or size. In this vein, this article has assessed the federalist founding fathers thesis, functionalist theory, and the approaches of Milward and Mearsheimer.

Fourthly, with the application of management approaches, some concepts in politics and international relations acquire novel meanings. An illustration of this is the interpretation of the "participation" concept by CT. In evaluating the relationship between the environment contingency and structure, it claims that in unstable environments, participatory structures are fitting since knowledge and information is required from the lower levels for innovation. This pragmatic approach emphasizes the technical side of participation and relegates democratic reasons to a secondary position.

Finally, when applied to the field of international relations, CT is a powerful policy-relevant theory (George 1993; Nincic and Lepgold 2000; Walt 2005; Nye Jr. 2008). In addition to contributing to our understanding of organizations, CT (especially the policy determinism and SARFIT models) defines certain courses of action that will supposedly increase the performance of organizations. In the case of European integration, since the so-called community method described in social-scientific terms by Neofunctionalism (Rosamond 2000:51), no theory has attempted to explain and predict the integration process while giving a recipe for governance of the European integration process. CT promises policy-makers that if they keep the structure of the EU in harmony with contingencies, the performance of the EU will improve. As a negative example, it is worth remembering the EDC Treaty that aimed at creating a defense policy with a supranational (hierarchical) structure that would have not been in fit with the unstable atmosphere of the 1950s. In cases where contingencies shape the structure unilaterally, CT informs the policy makers of the possible structural outcomes and other consequences. This may be attributed to the fact that CT was born as a management theory and is therefore inherently pragmatic.

*Further Research*

CT was initially developed for business firms that are simpler and of much smaller scale compared to the EU. Due to the colossal size and infamously complicated nature of the EU, CT's explanatory and predictive power remains limited in some respects. In particular, practical concerns impose a certain degree of reductionism in the policy determinism model. This model attributes a central importance to the European Council, the Council of

Ministers, and the European Commission, whereas the influence of the EP is seen as less important. However, there are convincing arguments on the agenda-setting powers of the EP (Tsebelis, 1994 and 1996). In some historic cases such as the Single European Act, the EP had a substantial influence (Moravcsik, 1991:22). In a similar vein, domestic electoral or party politics or public opinion in member states are not the primary concern of the CT. As Schimmelfennig (2010:53) notes, these concepts need to be addressed more in theoretical approaches to the European integration in the future. Otherwise, integration theory will not go beyond the elite level.

As indicated in the policy determinism section above, in managerial CT the scope of the dominant coalition has gradually been expanded with further studies to include other actors besides the senior executives. Perhaps, future research on CT may formulate a more comprehensive definition of the concept of dominant coalition for international organizations as well.

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