

Evolving Europe: Voices of the Future

Loughborough, 8-9 July 2013

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**Between liminality and hybridity
- Moldovan identity and the borders of Europe -**

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**Paper presented at 14th Annual UACES Student Forum Research Conference
'Evolving Europe: Voices of the Future'
Loughborough University, July 8-9, 2013**

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When talking about foreign policy, many commentators have judged Moldova's twenty years of independence not as a balancing act in between East and West, but more as a confused 'one step back, two steps forward'. Former Prime Minister Vlad Filat argued in 2011 for the government's European oriented foreign policy by stating that 'the Republic of Moldova is in Europe – geographically, historically, culturally, and under all other guises'. Yet, if this view recognised all across Moldovan society why is there such incoherence within Chisinau's foreign policy discourse? And if not, what alternatives are there to it? In this context, this paper aims to see how national identity and representations of Europe can shed some light on the way in which foreign policy is legitimised and articulated in Moldova.

Moldova is a very complex case in terms of nationalism, essentially a 'site of failed nation-building projects' (Cash, 2008), a country still divided in between an ethnic Moldovanist and a Romanianist view of its own identity. The first of these discourses holds that the people of Moldova are Moldovan and, through that, different from Romanians, whilst the second argues the opposite (King, 2000). More importantly, these lead to different conceptualisations of Moldova's Europeaness, Romanianists usually considering themselves to be European, whilst Moldovanists remaining ambiguous on the issue, as we will see in the next pages. Lastly, there is also the Russian identity that must be taken into account, both as an external 'other', but also through the presence of a Russian minority in Moldova; the most important character of this identity, as illustrated in the next pages, is that it is 'essentially non-European' (Interview with the author, June 2012). These three identities will be the framework for the analysis, as they will either complement or contradict the European identity on different levels, thus being key for understanding Chisinau's foreign policy articulations.

There is a very wide literature on Moldovan nationalism, yet very little written on the relationship between national identity and foreign policy. Within this context, most previous studies have stated unequivocally that Romanianist thinking is essentially pro-European, but none have gone in depth in analysing the mechanisms of this association. King (2001) for example has correlated three types of Moldovan national identity, Romanianism, civic and ethnic Moldovanism, with three types of foreign policy, respectively, pro-European, multi-

vector and pro-Russian; thus, he stressed the importance of this middle ground foreign policy, but did not dwell on the way in which equivalences are created in between them. Other studies associate Moldovanism with a pro-Russian foreign policy (see Protsyk, 2006), something that, whilst present in Romanianist representations of Moldovanism, can easily be challenged through current day examples such as the PCRM's over-arching multi-vector foreign policy 2001-2009 or the Socialists orientation. In this context, this paper aims to explain the mechanisms through which national identity and representations of Europeanness can help legitimise a pro-European and a multi-vector foreign policy. It also aims to challenge the view that whilst the pro-European and pro-Romanian foreign policy is an idealistic one, the multi-vector one can only be explained through the economic interests of Moldova, in stressing the national identity layer to this later foreign policy orientation. This will be achieved by analysing how Moldova's position in between the two spaces, East and West, is represented as either a liminal or a hybrid, either as a positive or a negative state.

In this endeavour the paper will employ the theoretical concept of liminality in order to stress the processual, dynamic character of Moldova's representations of its European character. Liminality has been developed by anthropologist Arnold van Gennep in 1909 to define the 'liminal phase' through which boys pass in order to become men (Neumann, 2012, p. 473). This was then adopted by Victor Turner (1969) who chose to focus on the experience of being betwixt and between social categories for the self or, as is Moldova's case, an identity represented as in between and containing elements from both the Russian and the European space. But most importantly, both these authors have stressed the temporality of this concept, whilst also pin-pointing the possibility of a permanent state of liminality (Neumann 2012, Malksoo, 2012). Thus, without glossing over the complexities of its use in international relations, especially in challenging pre-determined categories, this paper will employ the concept in stressing the dynamic nature of in-between state and the importance of the beginning and the end point of the ritual. These theoretical considerations will then be applied to the way in which Moldovans portray their own identity as a liminal to Europe and to Romania and, through this, offer an explanation to Moldova's foreign policy vector, as part of a predetermined ritual. Thus, the first section of the paper will analyse the meanings attached to Europe within a Moldovan context together with an assessment of whether, by these criteria, Moldova is or isn't European. The Romanianist identity discourse will also be integrated in the debate and this will be followed by an analysis of Moldovanist hybrid representations of identity and conclusions regarding the ways in which perceptions of liminality can help define foreign policy.

The methodological underpinnings of the paper are focused on the discourse theory of Laclau and Mouffe and discourse analysis as a method aimed at deconstructing what we perceive as common knowledge, in this case the legitimisation of Moldova's foreign policy (Howarth, 2000). Drawing from Malksoo (2012) question regarding how a society represents and experiences liminality, the paper will use both elite speeches and declarations, as well as grass roots interviews done by the author in Moldova April and June-August 2012. Moreover, there was a feeling in some interviewees that my question was superfluous, that there was no doubt that Moldova was European and thus, no need for any arguments to be brought to support this idea. For this reason, this paper supplements the data collected from interviews with newspapers and editorials in order to get a clear image of the way in which civil society represents Moldova's European identity. The former will cover the period from 2009, when the Alliance for European Integration came to power, until 2012.

Geography – ‘Of course we’re in Europe’

Three main types of representations have been employed to discern what it is to be European, a geographic, a cultural and historical definition and a normative one, focused around the idea of European values. Even as the criteria within the three are not discrete, they will be analysed separately within the next pages. Drawing from Filat’s statement, as quoted in the introduction, the first definition of Europe is a **geographic** one. An excerpt from one of my interviews underlines Moldova’s belonging to a geographical Europe very well when noting that ‘I met this old man who said: “Well, I’ve looked on a map and we’re in Europe, what’s all this discussion about going TO Europe”’ (June 2012). Thus, the geographical criterion is not only the most obvious, but also the one that is perceived closest to being scientific and, hence, incontestable. Yet, this isn’t always the case, as series of arguments also being brought to support the idea of Moldova’s geographical belonging to Europe. The most common one stems from the imagining of Europe as extending from the Atlantic to the Urals, an idea first put across by general Charles de Gaulle. Then, there is another idea: that it is only 150km from the Romanian border (i.e. that is Moldova’s width), so Moldova must be geographically European (Interview with the author, June 2012). This is relevant not only through evaluation of space, but also through the fact that Romania, as a member of the EU is considered to be automatically European, whilst also stressing Moldova’s position on the border. Then, many of my interviews have reiterated the idea of the centre of Europe: a geographical point that is a widely debated issue, but one of its embodiments lies in Rakhiv, South-Western Ukraine, a central element in explaining how Moldova is geographically European. There are many other arguments, but most importantly, this discussion stresses the contestability and lack of sedimentation of Moldova’s geographical Europeaness, shown by the wide range of arguments used to support it.

History – ‘Remember, Stephen the Great...’

Another common argument for Moldova’s Europeaness is focused around a representation of its **history** as belonging to Europe and can draw from historical actors and events all the way from medieval Moldova to the Soviet age. Such an example focuses on the rule of Moldovan prince Stephen the Great, 1457-1504, and argues that his Europeaness is proven by his position as a defender of the **Christian faith** and having been named ‘the athlete of Christ’ by the pope. In this context, a few of my interviewees have argued that whilst poorer and further away from the great capitals of Europe, this title is proof of the fact that Moldova and Stephen were part of the Occident, as some chooses to call it (June 2012). Thus, the religious argument together with the equivalence between European and Western helps define a historical Europe that includes Moldova. Moreover, defining the borders of Europe through the articulations of Western European leaders (here, the pope) is a discourse used in current day debates too, when Moldova’s foreign policy is also legitimated through the calls for reform from Brussels. Furthermore, the acknowledgement of the West’s development as opposed to the East’s poverty is also a recurrent theme in current day representations as will be highlighted in the following pages, portraying European superiority and thus standing at the basis of an Orientalist construction. Orientalism is ‘style of thought based [...] on a distinction made between the Orient and Occident’ and a ‘Western Style of

domination, restructuring and having authority over the Orient' (Said, 1978, pp.2-3). Through it, Eastern civilisations are defined by lack of progress and modernisation and as having despotic systems of governance, but more importantly this image of the Orient is instrumentalised and institutionalised for cultural dominance and for the legitimisation of Western actions to rule and civilise these people. This will be a very common theme when discussing Europe as defined by its values.

Yet, returning to the historical definition, we must note that the religious argument is ambiguous, because Moldova is Christian Orthodox and because Huntington (1993), whom a few Moldovans have mentioned in interviews, chooses to divide the European 'civilisations' on the border between Orthodoxy and the Catholic and Protestant world, thus challenging this united view of Europe. On this line of thought one interviewee, upon being asked whether the Moldovans were European remarked quite amused that 'If we are not European, what are we? Do we belong to the Arabic or Islamic world?' (July 2012). Thus, whereas the first argument, through its use of the imagery of the pope, didn't quite challenge Huntington's divide between Eastern and Western Christianity, the second achieves this by constructing a unified Christian space and opposition to Islam and other religions. The issue though remains: does this latter religious 'merge' posit that Russia is European? To answer this, the religious dichotomy between Christianity and Islam has been taken a step further and equated with the antagonism between Russia and the West. According to this argument, Russia's issues stem from its expanding Muslim minority, from the problems of Chechnya to the increasing power of oil-rich Tatarstan and the number of Tartars in the Russian government (Interview with the author, July 2012). And through this, Russia becomes an epitome of Islam, of what it not European. Thus, conceptualisations of religion are used to support the same idea of Moldova's European character, through different dichotomies between Europe and its religious 'other'.

Moving beyond the religious debate, the historical argument is translated to current day into the idea of '**the return to Europe**'. Drawing from Milan Kundera's (1984) thinking, Moldova is represented as historically European, but kidnapped by Tsarist Russia and then the Communist regime; furthermore, departing from the Czech thinker's argument, the liberal party also portray the almost two decades of agrarian and the communist rule in post-communist Moldova as also having acted as breaks on Moldova's normal historical development and return to Europe. Hence, through the past-present-future link, history becomes essential in understanding foreign policy articulations in Moldova. Then interim president of Moldova Mihai Ghimpu (9.5.2010) illustrates this point very well, when he argues that

'the Republic of Moldova must retake its place in the European family, to which it is tied through values and principles [...] we strive towards the European Union because we have a hard historical imprint. This is why we need to free ourselves forever from the communist past and mobilise ourselves for what comes next [...] The road back to the disaster we've had for the past 20 years is not an option'

The excerpt also emphasises how a pro-European foreign policy is legitimated, by portraying it as a natural process of returning to Europe, as a form of compensation for Moldova's past. Furthermore, the idea of 'disaster' stresses the negative character of the past as opposed to the positive nature of the European Union. This is very clear in Romanianist representations of the history that focus on the Russian and Soviet 'occupations' as periods of terror and

stagnation (Solonari, 2002). Moreover, through this we can see that this type of identification with Europe, as associated with the legitimisation of foreign policy is used both for internal and external legitimisation, being focused on appealing to both the people of Moldova and the external decision makers, such as the EU commission and EU states. On this line of thought, this discourse is not limited to the Moldovan political scene, as a series of supporters of Chisinau's EU aspirations have also stressed its European character. The Bulgarian president, Rosen Plevneliev, has argued that 'Bulgaria and Moldova have a common past and Moldova is part of the European family' (Unimedia, 19.04.2012). This association is very similar to the 'Occident kidnappee' construction, stressing the idea of the communist rupture from Europe. Lastly, this type of discourse, both legitimising Moldova's EU aspirations and its entitlement, is hardly unique, being a reiteration of representations present all across central and Eastern Europe (see Kuus, 2007). The uniqueness of Moldova, though, stems from its historical experience as a divided nation and the way in which this can problematise foreign relations with the East, as will be stressed in the last section of this paper.

Cultural and Linguistic Europe – 'Latin, thus European'

Linked to the idea of a common history is the **cultural** argument of belonging to Europe. One strand of this associates language with culture and just as the arguments above, this can be used to prove Moldova's European character both internally and externally. In this context, prime-minister Filat during an EU – Republic of Moldova economic conference argued that

Moldova is the only country from the **Latin** areal that is outside of the European space. It has no alternative but European integration (quoted in Adevarul, 25 April 2012).

The first theme emerging from his statement is the assimilation between the EU and the European space or, to be more specific, Europe. This phenomenon is widely acknowledged all across discourses on the European Union and appears in most representation and especially during my interviews. But more importantly, this definition of Europe portrays Moldova as outside this space, whilst speaking a Latin language is perceived as a cultural and linguistic characteristic of Europe, to the point to which it should inform foreign policy. Hence, from the point of view of the language Moldova is a liminal, both outside Europe, but presenting characteristics of the European space. This argument isn't limited to the political elites, as interviews at grass roots have also noted a series of language related arguments such as the 'Indo-European character of the language' (sic!), the fact that they are a Latin nation, but also belonging to the Balkan culture and *la francophonie* (sic!). Thus, a whole range of arguments are brought to support the idea that Moldova is culturally European, both stressing the multiple meanings attached to Europe and the contestability of Moldova's European character.

Moreover, the idea of speaking a Latin language intrinsically reiterates the Romanian and Romanianist discourses of national identity. These hold that the people of Romania are a Latin nation surrounded by Slavs, highlighting the importance of the 'Slav' as the Romanian's 'other' within this construction of identity (Interviews with the author, June-July 2012). Thus, through this criterion, the idea of being European can be linked with, although not subsumed within, the idea of being Romanian; this is a very important point, as this Latin character is also attributed to the Moldovan language, ensuring that the point above can be

generalised within Moldova. Romanianists, such as journalist and author Stela Popa (2010) will not hesitate in arguing that 'We are European and we speak an official language of the EU!' thus making the connection between language and (Romania's) belonging to Europe/EU. Yet, whilst Romanianists will argue that there is no such thing as the Moldovan language, they are a bit more hesitant when it comes to arguing that they speak Romanian. Researchers at the Moldovan Natural History and Ethnography Museum have used the term *grai* or 'speech' to define the difference in between Romanian and Moldovan

Our speech is the same as the one in Iasi [Romanian Moldova] with ,shi', with ,ghine', ,oleaca', not ,picutu' as in Ardeal. [...] And we in our Moldovan speech also use some words, Russian mangled words, Russian terms... but you have this issue in Romania too with English words (June 2012).

Scientifically there are a series of differences between Romanian and the language spoken in Moldova, which has suffered changes over the almost two centuries of Russian and Soviet occupation. It has more Slavic influences than Romanian, comprising words that in Romanian are seen as either archaisms or regionalisms¹ or ones that have been brought into the language throughout the nineteenth and twentieth century, whereas Romanian was importing neologisms mostly from French and other European languages (Deletant, 1996; Dyer, 1996). Yet, a less scientific and different representation of these differences is reiterated by people in Moldova, one that stresses their perception of their liminal identity. This is not an isolated discourse, being very common and incorporating the perception that the language they speak is not 'correct'. For example a PNL member, a unionist, admitted to me in an interview in July 2012 that they 'have a different dialect, [they] speak like a Moldovan, not correctly Romanian with all the notions and correct expressions'. The main problem with the language is acknowledged as being the multitude of Russian expressions used on a day to day basis, as an interviewee explained 'we speak a more Russified dialect, whereas you speak a polished Romanian' (July 2012). This phenomenon was extremely common in my fieldwork, as I speak an, arguably, accentless Romanian that stood out and a lot of the Moldovans I met would not only pick up on it, but would also attempt to explain to me the differences in the way we speak and explain the Russian words they used. Thus, the Romanianists represent themselves as linguistically Romanian, but at the same time different from them. This difference, perceived as incorrectness, is achieved through a contamination of the language they speak with Russian terms and expressions or, to be more specific, with elements belonging to the national other, the Russian or the Slav. Moreover, this is extended to other cultural endeavours, Romanianists also criticising the Moldovan tendency to consume 'entertainment' in Russian and from Russian sources, from music to books, movies and TV series (Interview with the author, June 2012); furthermore, some of these are linked to negative behaviour, such as violence as determined by watching Russian TV shows. But the more important element feeding into this liminality is the representation of Russia as not only the Romanianist 'other', but as non-European from a cultural point of view. The arguments brought in favour of this idea range from their ethnic origins, Mongolian and nomad influence on their beliefs and temperament and, generally, their art and culture as reproducing these origins, such as the architecture of their churches (focus group, Chisinau, July 2012). In this way, the perpetuation of the effects of Russian and Soviet rule over Moldova are represented as the denting Moldova's European character.

¹For example the PCGN Report (2005) highlights *borta* (hole), *gospodar* (prince) or *mita* (cat) which are also widely used in Romanian Moldova to this day.

Moreover, within this context, Moldova is represented as inferior, speaking incorrectly, and as a Romanian-liminal, thus stressing the negative character of this influence.

The cultural inferiority complex isn't only articulated in relation to the visible Russian influence, but also in the way in which by firstly eliminating a generation of intellectuals in the 1950s, followed by the impact it has had on the following generations, it created a sense of marginalisation, periphery and inferiority which continues to affect Moldovan cultural creations to this day. A Chisinau-based editorialist has stressed this point in a conversation, focusing on the problems they have with speaking Romanian properly, but also the quality of the literature in Moldova and their tendency to limit themselves to their own space in attempting to overcome this perceived inferiority (August 2012). He nuances these claims later, not as a critique to the people of culture in Moldova, but as one aimed at the lack of proper Romanian cultural and linguistic policies in the republic. Yet, partly due to the Soviet policies and partly to the lack of Romanian policies, the Moldovan cultural scene portrays itself as inferior to the Romanian one. This doesn't necessarily link into debates on Moldova's European identity, but this inferiority towards Romania, together with Romania's perceived belonging to Europe, is another element that can feed into the Moldovan inferiority complex towards Europe, just as it problematised the 'Latin language' argument above. Thus, the representation of the Romanian other, geographically and linguistically European (not to mention a member of the EU) is an important factor in representing Moldovan Europeaness, especially its inferiority complex towards Romania and, hence, towards Europe.

Having seen how speaking a Latin language, be it Romanian or Moldovan, is seen as an criterion of Europeaness, being Romanian is probably the most straightforward argument for Moldova's Europeanity. Some Romanianist interviewees have put that across to me in quite simple terms, whilst also not questioning in any way Romania's European character (June-July 2012). Then, the last section has also stressed the way in which the religious argument is employed to argue for Moldova's European character. Lastly, there are a multitude of other arguments for the cultural Europeaness of Moldova, usually pointing out the way in which cultural integration precedes the more complex political process. Music is one area where this happens as

'just as Romania before entering the EU in 2007 was part of this community, she belonged to Europe, it would be a great error to say that Moldova isn't, in the same way, in the European community from a cultural point of view, through the cultural arguments that stand at the basis of musical education' (Radio Free Europe, 21.09.2012).

Just as the return to Europe was the historical argument for European integration, the cultural argument is proof of Moldova's movement towards Europe and the EU. Thus, cultural arguments place Moldova within the European space, whilst the Russian influence on language and culture acts as a factor determining liminality and inferiority towards Romania and Europe.

'Official' European values...

Yet, the most common representation of Europe is as a **normative** space. From politicians to grass-roots, everyone in Moldova talks about the European values. In this context, the

next few pages will argue that these European values stand at the centre of the Moldovan reiteration of an Orientalist discourse. They are not only implicitly seen as superior, as the next section will highlight, but also directly recognised as such. A discussion with a Moldovan has stressed that 'the European culture and civilisation is net superior through its value system. To all other continents' (July 2012). Thus, we witness a reiteration of a part of the Orientalist discourse, but this time through the very subject of this type of articulation, more specifically the 'colonised'. It becomes, thus, a recognition of the superiority of the 'other', here as Europe/European Union and an acceptance of the 'other's path of development. Lastly, there are considerable differences in between representations of 'European values' at the political and official level, where integration in the EU is seen as a national endeavour, and grass-roots, which is why the analysis of the two will be separated to a certain extent. In terms of the first category, data is drawn from official speeches and interviews with party members and the main focus of the analysis will be on the way in which Moldova is represented as essentially democratic and thus legitimate in its pursuit of EU integration.

'European values' can easily be deemed as being just an empty signifier, taking a whole range of meanings. For example, Moldova is represented as democratic and European all the way through its historical development, from the way in which in 1918 reunification was accomplished through a democratic vote to the way in which governments have changed peacefully in the past decades, as opposed to the Georgian and Ukrainian revolutionary experiences (Interview with a Moldovan Liberal Party youth leader, July 2012). Thus, European here is equated with democratic. Yet, the association between European values and democracy, a well acknowledged 'cluster term' (see Connolly, 1974), sheds very little light on the actual content of the now two empty signifiers. Most times, references will be made to 'the European value space' as the aim for Moldova's European integration and former prim-minister Vlad Filat identifies this space as one of 'pace, democracy and prosperity' (2.11.2012). He then go into somewhat more detail in his speech and associates this space with, yet again, 'democracy, pluralism, a developed economy and free citizens' (Filat, 2.11.2012). For him, the quest for European integration is one of modernising the country

'modernising our education system in order to be more competitive in a globalised world. We are modernising the police so the law can be respected and applied. We're simplifying the fiscal policy and border regime in order to facilitate and develop the business environment' (Filat, 2.11.2012).

This narrative of modernisation both highlights the backwardness of Moldova and its transition towards Europe. Transition is essential here, because liminality as an anthropological concept was defined in relation to a ritual, represented in this case by the idea of transition. But more importantly, Moldova's underdevelopment is essential in explaining prime-minister Filat's foreign policy, as just as the liminal in the ritual can move towards the final of the ritual, Moldova moves from underdevelopment to the development of the European Union. Thus, Moldova's very condition of liminality demands this foreign policy.

Whilst the political sphere works with very complex definitions of 'European values', instrumentalising these empty signifiers in order to legitimate its purposes, at grass roots and newspaper levels, a whole range of other meanings are attached to them. In this context, the next paragraphs will look at just a few of these in order to see how Moldova is portrayed as

within or outside Europe according to civil society discourses. Furthermore, since the non-official discourse is not limited by the hegemonic argument of legitimising European integration, these articulations are more open towards criticising the lack of European characteristics within Moldova and its people. This analysis will firstly attempt to emphasise how the Russian space is constructed within this context as opposite to the European, in order to understand how Moldova is positioned in between the two.

Grass-roots European values

Grass-roots representations don't focus only on the values of the political system, encompassing a far wider array of criteria for Europeaness or lack thereof, from corruption to levels of culture. The data for this section is drawn from both grass-root interviews and newspaper in Moldova 2009-2012. For example, Vitalie Ciobanu, in an editorial for Radio Free Europe, discusses not only the lack of Europeaness of Moldova, but the duplicity of its leaders considering that they can make concessions on European values. He presents Russia's lack of democratic values, whilst also equating Moldova with it. In this context he argues regarding the country's political class that

'the reality of Ghimpu's words describe the Euro-Asian world, to which Moscow is insistently inviting us together with satellites [...] Russia embraces us as we are – corrupt, underdeveloped, with a problematic democracy – because we're like her, with the same problems as the Russian state and society, where the disregard for the law and governments abuses have become 'trademarks' (Ciobanu, 4.07.2012).

Thus, European values and European democracy are represented in a negative relationship with the characteristics of the Eastern space, as anti-democratic. This idea of Europe as defined through its dichotomy with the Eastern space is further iterated through a more historical approach to representing the East:

R: To say Russia is European is forced. They tried to be European in the tsarist era and this was the whole idea with Saint Petersburg and European, German names. They tried because up until then they were just a nation, like many others in Asia.

I: And did they succeed?

R: No. Mentally, conceptually, in terms of civilisation ...no. And history confirms this: the greatest genocide ever committed was in the Soviet Union. Their whole system (Interview with the author, July 2012).

This has highlighted the way in which Russia's lack of Europeaness through its history also impacts on today's developments, a central point of the narrative being the equivalence with the Soviet regime as representing the Russian space with its horrors and repressions. The idea that Russia has never been historically European, and if it has it was limited to the Russian leadership (e.g Peter the Great's Europeanising reforms), and thus doesn't share the cultural and value system of Europe is a recurrent themes in other interviews too (June-July 2012). Counter-discourses will rarely go all the way to consider Russia European from a normative points of view, but present it as an 'in-between', with people who look and think like the Europeans and people with 'purely Asiatic values', an area of transition that makes the gap between the two value systems smaller (Interview with the author, July 2012). The main Russian value identified is velikorusism, a form of extreme Russian nationalism that is

blind to anything but Russian interests and pride together with a narrative of being 'under siege' (Interview with official, July 2012). Thus, the Moldovan representation of Russia is based to a great extent on its own interaction with Moscow (see Wendt, 1992), not on Russia as an isolated actor. A very similar point also brings in the poverty of Russia, alcoholism and laziness in order to argue for Russia's lack of Europeaness. Yet, the main thread is, again, that of governance and the values that cause this phenomenon:

Russia is barbarian, it is not European . Their leaders' behaviour, their standard of living outside of Moscow and the great cities. It's a mess, alcohol, lacking money, under-fed, over-authoritarian, because they lack authority and this is not Europe. They don't really like working, like any empire (June 2012).

My interviewees often blurred the borders in between different types of criteria in defining the Eastern space, as we can see above, merging the lack of democratic values within the political leadership with poverty and the negative characteristics of the population as a whole. This highlights the equivalence in between economic development and a good standard of living and good governance, as an essential element in the dichotomy in between East and West. Moreover, this collusion of criteria referring both to the leadership and general population is extremely useful, as it is on these two levels that this paper will look at how Moldova portrays itself as 'not quite' European, whilst also not essentialising the divide.

Whereas the representations of Russia as non-European have helped place Moldova in between the two spaces, there is also a link in between Russia's influence in Moldova, as determining Moldova's lack of Europeaness. This has already been stressed in discussion the Russian influence of the Moldovan/Romanian language through the policies of Tsarist Russia and the Soviet regime. Thus, the historical narrative of the 'Occident kidnappe' is corroborated with one that not only represents Russia as the antipode of Europe, but also constructs it as the agent to blame for Moldova's liminality. This is summed up very well in the following except from one of my interviewees

I think that maybe because we've been occupied for so long by the Russian empire, we ended up with a more russified dialect and an attitude oriented more towards Russia than Europe (July 2012).

Moreover, the excerpt illustrates the way in which both mentality, as a way of thinking encompassing most Moldovan sins, and cultural elements such as language, albeit so different, are blamed on the Russian occupation. Another discussion has highlighted the same effect on the political level

We do have a lot to work on justice, because we've had that lack of an authentic justice system in the communist and tsarist periods, when there was no justice being administered and many decisions were taken not through the courts, but by political actors (Interview with the author, July 2012)

Stemming from the Romanianist historical discourse, Moldova is a Romanian and European liminal both culturally and values-wise, due to the Russian influence it has suffered through the ages. This narrative of blame is most often found with Romanianist supporters, but the first quote is from someone who does not claim to adhere to either national identity discourses, thus stressing the widespread nature of this theme.

Within this context of the mentality of the Moldovan people it is useful to turn towards an academic analysis done across Ukraine, Georgia and Moldova evaluating Moldovan society and Moldovan individuals' European character. This acknowledges the fact that even scientific work is a discursive construct, firstly through the way in which it represents the 'discovered' reality and secondly, through the way in which its 'findings' become part of the greater discursive matrix; with this in mind, the paper has also looked at the way in which this study is reflected within the Moldovan press, through an interview and analysis in Radio Free Europe. Hence, drawing from the communist propaganda on the 'homo sovieticus', the concept used to define the Moldovan way of thinking is the 'post-soviet man'. This idea encompasses the difference in mentality between the 'European man' and the people of Moldova, whilst also pin-pointing the agent to blame for them. Researcher Corneliu Ciurea (2013), who has been part of a team who has applied this concept, defined it as:

'we think a new man has been born in this post-soviet period, a man that isn't totally guided by soviet values, sometimes he even looks at them rationally, whilst also being headed towards European, western values'

Thus, the liminality of the way of thinking on Moldovans is due to their transition from the Soviet to the European way of thinking. Some of the criteria included within this concept are political intolerance (especially in politics), lying, paternalism or a parochial civic culture. Another anti-European characteristic is the presence of bribery and favouritism, yet this isn't entirely due to the Soviet era, being more of a byzantine-fanariot effect, even as the soviet impact has not been negated entirely. Thus, not all of the Moldovan's defects are due to the Soviet regime, but just as before, these characteristics are described as 'foreign to our European clothing, to the European coat we should all be wearing' (Ciurea, 2013). Thus, it is not only the existence of these characteristics at the level of Moldovan people that this paper focuses on, but the way in which they are represented as essentially anti-European. Moreover, this discourse is not only present within the research domain, it is also almost omni-present in grass-roots discussions and newspaper articles and editorial, whilst also making appearances in the political sphere, as will be highlighted in the following paragraphs.

A lot of other characteristics are represented as European and as missing in Moldova, thus denting its European credentials. One of such is determination and self-belief as 'people here always expect approval from left or right, down or up. There are things that if you consider correct you must do, take the risk [both on an individual] and country level' (Interview with the author, July 2012). This links in to the idea of individualism as a value of the West. Then, author and journalist, Stela Popa (2010) talks about the need for tolerance in Moldova and the way in which a European democratic regime would help achieve this. In this case, by associating democracy and European values, she pinpoints 'tolerance' as one of European values Moldova is missing. A different editorialist represents the Moldovans as being kind people, tolerant and sees this as a sign that they are European (Interview with the author, July 2012); it is worth noting that the two authors employ the criterion in different contexts, but this nevertheless, emphasise the way in which the same idea can be used to argue different opinions. Moreover, on the level of leadership, editorialists mark these ideas as 'corruption in the justice system, education, health, public administration is fed by us, the citizens on a daily basis. And the press isn't foreign to this mentality either' (Ciobanu, 4.07.2012).

Then, there is the issue of a lack of culture, which is very interesting because 'culture in this paper is used as the anthropological term, yet in Romanian² both it and civilisation are also used to define the level of cultivation within the general population. In this context, a few of my interviewees saw the very low levels of culture, with the latter understanding, as a sign that Moldova was not European, as this space is characterised by a very high 'culture'; even more relevantly, this conclusion was not drawn from my interviewee's direct experience of Europe and its people, but from his surfing the internet, thus stressing the plurality of sources and spaces in which this inferiority complex is constructed. This is further mentioned in other grass-roots interviews, the level of culture in Moldova being one of the elements that problematizes its European credentials, together with its level of economic development (Interview with parliamentary aide, July 2012). Culture here isn't limited to basic things such as how much Moldovans read or the number of cultural events, but the values they apply in day to day life, colloquial things like parking on the pavement, reason why this discussion was relegated under the 'Values' section. This brings the discussion on Europeanness to characteristics of the individual and of the nation, no longer encompassing values related to the political system. Summarising the ideas above, the Moldovans are not European as 'nationally, we're not only poor, but our intellectual level is very low. In one sentence: we're both poor and stupid' (Interview with the author, August 2012). Nevertheless, these constructions never negate the European origins of the Moldovan culture, this time in the anthropological sense, reiterating the historical argument as presented above. It is within this context that Moldova's European integration is represented as Moldova being 'not ready. [...] we are not ready from the infrastructure, education, culture, from every point of view' (Interview with the author, July 2012). Thus, Moldova is yet again, not quite European.

Lastly, the influence of the Church is brought forward as an argument for Moldova not being European. This is used in reiterating the narrative of their protests against rulings required by the European Union, such as the biometric ID cards and equality laws. Moreover, the role of the church and the Moldovan people as church goes and, through this, as not modern, was stated by a series of youths during my fieldwork, thus hinting that the modern – pre-modern dichotomy may also be used in this construction. Yet, within most contexts the influence of the church is not contradictory with Europe as much as it is a sign of the lack of political maturity, the ability to rationalise politics and to exclude the religious argument from politics. It is all an exercise of political 'growing up' many people have argued (Fieldwork notes, June-July 2012). Thus, issues from a lack of tolerance to corruption and church involvement in politics are represented as characteristics that make Moldova not European, but the stress has been throughout on the transitory character of these constructions, the idea of 'growing up'. This appears through the fact that every time a discussion of Moldova's European character is started it inevitably ends up discussing Moldova's foreign policy, with the hope that even as it is not European, it's more of a 'not YET European' thinking. The narrative of transition is internalised not only on this level, but in actual specifics:

I understand our standards aren't up to par. The standards the Europeans ask of us and we don't have yet [...] We are far from Europe... but at least roads are being built, even though there's a long way to go (Interview with the author, August 2012).

² I choose the name Romanian for the language spoken in Moldova and in which my interviews were conducted, in order to comply with the decision of the Moldovan Academy of Sciences claiming that Moldovan and Romanian are the same language.

The reality of standards and the way in which this concept is employed is proof of the structured and organised nature of the ritual that is transition in Moldovan representations. Moreover, as mentioned above, economic development, represented quite commonly through the quality of roads, is a very important signifier in determining whether Moldova is European. But more important is this idea of developing, of becoming more European, even through small things which both creates a dynamic representation of Moldova's position as moving closer to Europe, whilst also re-textualising the historical 'return to Europe' discourse. Furthermore, roads are a very common element used to portray Moldova's backwardness when it comes to Romania, someone actually mentioning them in a discussion of what new things did they find upon first coming to Romania, next to the beauty of the Carpathian Mountains (Fieldwork notes, June 2012). And it is through small elements such as this that the developmental superiority of Romania is stressed, representing it as part of the EU and of 'developed' Europe. Lastly, a whole range of positive qualities are being associated with being European, from being clean and hardworking, to being kind people, whereas negative ones are associated or, seen as the reason for not being European, such as laziness. Thus, being European is an essentially good thing as opposed to the current situation in Moldova in the view of many of my interviewees, especially Romanianists. Hence, the last pages have highlighted the more critical view of civil society regarding their own Europeaness, through a series of criteria defined as 'European values'. This acts as a counter-discourse to the official one, thus illustrating the problematic nature of European identity in Moldova.

Some conclusions – Moldova as Somewhat European

Concluding, the two main elements that have legitimised a pro-European foreign policy can be subsumed as the 'development narrative' and the historico-cultural entitlement. The first encompasses the Moldovan representation of the self as inferior, within an Orientalist discourse, together with the imagery of Europe, and its equivalent, the European Union wealthy, democratic and, hence, superior. Moreover, this type of discourse does not bear the national identity imprint, being available both for Romanianists and Moldovanists, especially illustrated through the fact that my interview data encompassed both groups and those who do not rally themselves behind a national identity discourse. Meanwhile, the second grouping is slightly more specific in terms of the way it which it rearticulates national identity discourses, being mostly based around Romanianist ideas regarding the elements of the nation, such as language, history and culture. Nevertheless, arguments such as those referring to religion and representing the language the Moldovans speak simply as a Latin one are elements around which the whole Moldovan nation can unite.

The main point highlighted has been the negative character of the Russian and Eastern example, as opposed to the positive values and characteristics equated with Europe and the European Union. Within this context, Moldova has been placed as containing characteristics of both, in different positions in between the two, thus to certain extents a liminal of Europe. Moreover, this liminality is an essentially dynamic one, subsumed in the process of transition and in representing Moldova not as in between Russia and Europe, but as 'not yet' European, thus stressing the final point in its historical path.

An alternative? Moldova as a Hybrid

Within this representation of Europe as both economically and normatively superior, how would it be possible then to legitimise a foreign policy that doesn't have a rapprochement with Europe at its centre? Thus, the main aim of this section is to look at the way in which Moldovanist parties, such as the Communists and Socialists, argue for a multi-vector foreign policy and how they employ articulations of national identity discourse within this. The main focus will be on the Socialists firstly because unlike the Communists who have in 2012-2013 veered towards a pro-Eastern foreign policy, they have kept to this multi-vector orientation and secondly because the author has had the opportunity to discuss, and challenge, these ideas in great detail with two of the Socialist Party's leadership in July 2012. In order to explain this process, we must look at their conceptualisation of Moldovanism and assess if that this can be used as a frame for understanding foreign policy.

Moldovanist national identity discourses can be summed up as supporting the idea that the people of Moldova are Moldovan and that they speak the Moldovan language and not Romanian. Yet, behind this very general view there are a multitude of discourses, stemming from a wide range of sources and periods, from the Soviet articulations to current day historical writings (see van Meurs, 1998, King 2000). Their main idea is that the Moldovan nation's origins are not solely within the Latin roots, but also influenced by the Slavs, from the migrations to the Tsarist period. Valeri Stepaniuc argues that in the Carpathian – Dniester area 'the population formed as a result of the merge of radical free Dacians with Romanized Dacians who came from the West, and with the Slavs who came from the East' (2005, p. 19) in the same way in which Soviet history textbooks underlined the importance of the Eastern Slavs within the tribes that amalgamated to form the Moldovan people (Solonari, 2002, p. 421). Yet, this goes beyond the historical academic debate, a leader of the Moldovan Christian Democratic Party (PPCD) arguing that

with these two lungs I breathe the two cultures. With one I breathe the Romanian culture and with the other – Russian culture. And I am sure that it is this the source of the uniqueness and beauty of our culture and spirituality in this country and of this people accumulate our interior wealth from two sources and this cultural synthesis constitutes a great advantage, a great gift destiny has given us (Rosca, 2011, see also Rosca, 2012).

Thus, this mixed character is not seen as was in the Romanianist case, a tainting of the true national identity, but an advantage, as it defines the uniqueness of the Moldovan people. Within this context, another discussion in Chisinau has highlighted the way in which Moldovans perceive themselves as possessing an advantage through their ability to speak Russian, a phenomenon due to the position of this language during the Soviet period, stressing the direct application of Rosca's principles. This type of discourse falls very well into Homi Bhabha's 'third space of enunciation' (1994), thus avoiding the essentialisation done by the Romanianist discourse. The first section of the paper has shown the way in which liminality is perceived as a negative characteristic; opposed to this view, Rosca's conceptualisation of this mixed character is seen as a positive. I choose to define this representation as a hybrid, drawing from Bhabha's theorisation of the combination between indigenous and coloniser identities. This is a static term, chosen in order to avoid the association between the dynamic of the ritual and liminality. Static here is not a physical characteristic as much as it describes the 'contentedness' of Moldovanists with this mixed

identity to the point of which it becomes a part of the national character and an advantage, as seen above.

Taking into account that the two elements within the hybrid character of the Moldovan nation can be equated with the two main foreign policy orientations, Russia and the East and Romania, the EU and the West, the link in between the acceptance and reverence of hybridity and a 'static' foreign policy become apparent. Yet, before dwelling into this link, there are ways in which national identity discourses are directly rearticulated within foreign policy representation. The first hint that the multi-vector foreign policy discourse is more complex than economic interests is the argument for the pro-Eastern side of the orientation, based on a historical theme. More specifically, the idea Igor Dodon brings in order to support this is the historical relationship of fraternity in between the countries in the former CIS and, more generally, in the region (Socialistii, 14.06.2013). Communist leader Vladimir Voronin has argued the same thing, as the Moldovans 'have old relationships', a common language and we are being accepted there' (Romania Libera, 2011).

The main element in the Socialists' foreign policy discourse is the idea of Moldova functioning as a bridge in between East and West, as the essence of a multi-vector foreign policy. This is firstly based on the geographical positioning of Moldova in between the two spaces, ensuring it can collaborate advantageously with both East and West. This has been explained very clearly in discussions as

It is obvious Moldova is not ready to become a member of the EU and the EU is not ready to include Moldova, but at the same time, Moldova's geographical placement is very favourable for the EU to use it a bridge between the EU and the CIS, this being the Slavic world East of here. This is due to the population in Moldova having traditions of good friendship with all the post-soviet independent states and knowing the Russian language. So, on Moldovan territory you mix companies, both involving the Russian Federation, Kazakhstan, the Ukraine and the EU. This territory, the population's potential – its mentality is closer to the one in the CIS space, but tends towards European integration [...] Romania cannot do this, because they don't know the mentality of those in the post-soviet space, were not part of the Soviet Union, they don't know their behaviour, the things that can be solved from man to man and knowing the language they speak here. This territory can be used as a border zone for economic relations and exchanges, cultural, economic and social in between these two worlds that are so different from each other, the post-soviet space and the EU (Interview with a leader of the party, July 2012).

Thus, Moldova's advantage draws from the premise that it is not ready to become part of the EU, thus reiterating the inferiority complex in relation to the EU and Europe, as illustrated in the first section of the paper; yet, a difference arises in the fact that in not being ready for this endeavour, the Socialists refuse to think of a long term approach, thus almost eliminating the perspective of European integration all together. Hence, whereas the recognition of inferiority is present within their discourse, the acceptance of the European way of development is problematic, thus ensuring that they move away from the pure Orientalism exhibited by the pro-European foreign policy discourse.

Lastly, another element that ensures this construction is possible is the way in which the Eastern space is represented. The values that are being referred to above are those of

community, of working together, of the Christian Orthodox religion, that according to my interviewees are opposed to the West's individualism. Nevertheless, Moldova stands out from this space as 'elections, here compared to Russia, Belarus, are democratic, plus the freedom of the press and here every man can speak freely [...] And this means we are part of Europe' (Interview, July 2012). The mention of elections, freedom of the press and of speech helps reiterate the initial discourse regarding the democratic and superior character of Europe as opposed to the undemocratic East, here as Russia and Belarus. Moreover, even as Moldova is represented as democratic through these criteria, other arguments are brought to problematise its Europeanness, from bribery to copying in exams, presenting Moldova as 'not quite' European. Hence, the East and West are still portrayed as opposites when it comes to values, but this representation, whereas not ignoring the democratic issues of the Eastern space is more nuanced, stressing certain positive values as attached to this community.

If we'd want to discuss strict causality, Moldovan national identity correlates with the multi-vector foreign policy orientation, both being determined by the geographical and historical positioning of Moldova. But national identity also feeds into foreign policy, through the advantages, such as the linguistic one and the historical relationship with the East, that are brought forward within discourse as enabling the multi-vector policy. Thus, the same logic based on an acceptance of hybridity and the advantages drawn from the hybrid character of Moldova's national identity and its geopolitical positioning is employed both within discussion on nationalism and foreign policy. Hence, even though elements of the national identity discourse are rearticulated within the foreign policy one, the emphasis on the positive characteristics of hybridity is key in understanding the links between the identity and foreign policy in Moldova's case.

Conclusions - Is then Moldova European?

In an attempt to sketch an answer to this question, this paper has challenged the incontestability of Moldova's European character by discussing the various arguments that stand at its basis. Building on the multiple meanings associated with the concept of Europe, three main categories of arguments have arisen: geographical, cultural and normative. Whereas the geographical argument has illustrated the greatest degree of sedimentation, through ideas such as 'we've never left Europe, as we've never moved on the map', the cultural and linguistic ones have been problematised extensively in regards to Moldova. The example of language has stressed the way in which speaking a Latin language, an element claimed to be European, is tainted by the Russian/Slavic influence within it. Moreover, it has also highlighted the way in which this is perceived as a sign of inferiority to Romania and Romanians, being represented as 'speaking (Romanian) incorrectly'. This has underscored the role played by Romania, especially for the Romanianists in Moldova, in defining their European character. As a double edged sword, being Romanian is, within their representations, proof of their Europeanness, but at the same time, being not quite Romanian (and, thus, not quite European) through the existing Russian influence on their language and culture or their economic development, creates a sense of inferiority both against Romania and Europe.

A lot more popular and widely debated, the values-oriented definition of Europe paints a very contrasting picture of Moldova. The main value attached to Europe within this conceptualisation is democracy. Through the employment of a reverse Orientalist discourse, the Moldovans represent European values as superior not only to theirs, but more importantly to those belonging to the Eastern space, Russia included. By creating a dichotomy in between the two spaces and placing itself as somewhat more democratic than Russia, but with a lot of issues when compared to the EU, Moldova represents its identity as, yet again, not quite European. Furthermore, this type of conceptualisation of Europe as good and Russia as bad is further strengthened by the equivalence with the developed – undeveloped antagonism and many other characteristics, as emphasised in the text. Moreover, the values-oriented approach has stressed the existence of two very different discourses at official and grass-roots level regarding Moldova's Europeanness. The official discourse, trapped within its own construction of Moldova's ambitions of European integration, is vehement in arguing that Moldova is democratic and European. Meanwhile, civil society turns away from this optimist representation, finding an extensive array of criticisms to deny Moldova's European character both in its leadership and political class and in day to day life.

Thus, to answer the question in the introduction, Moldova is 'not quite' European, being represented as such within constructions ranging from the geographical positioning at the borders of the EU to the quality of its writers and its degree of political tolerance. But more importantly, the paper has attempted to link this 'not quite' identity with foreign policy. In this endeavour, the Moldovan discourse, as summed up in the last few paragraphs, has been defined as one of European liminality which works in tandem with a pro-European foreign policy. The conceptualisation of liminality is a dynamic one, based on the aspirations to be European (and Romanian) and the negative representation of the Eastern space and, implicitly, the betwixt state in-between. Thus, the unfavourable representation of this middle position becomes the main driver for wish to move outside of it, whilst historical and cultural experiences set the direction as 'a return to Europe'.

The alternative to this discourse is one of hybridity that portrays the in-between as positive both through the advantages it brings on the level of national identity and within foreign policy. This representation, then, doesn't require any form of movement and thus legitimises a static foreign policy oriented towards both East and West, a multi-vector one. This is further aided by a representation of Russia that is a bit more nuanced, with a series of favourable characteristics, but still reiterating the Orientalist representation of Moldova and Russia's democratic deficit.

Concluding, the relationship between national identity and foreign policy is a very complex one and, in the Moldovan case, it goes well beyond associating Romanianist nationalism with the EU and Moldovanism with Russia and the CIS space. This analysis has stressed the importance of the fact that identity is always defined relationally, that you cannot understand what it is to be European without understanding what is not and where the borders between the two are placed on a the discursive map. But more importantly, the Moldovan case has underlined how the same reality, that of being 'in-between', can be represented in radically different ways and thus can lead to extremely distinct foreign policy endeavours.

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