

The Politics of Identity – The
Influence of National Identity on
States' Foreign Policy Agenda
A Case Study of Post-Socialist Romania

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Abstract

This thesis explores the influence of national identity on Romania's post-socialist foreign policy agenda, working at the intersection of Strategic Culture and Foreign Policy Analysis. It adopts a constructivist approach, putting forward a narrative theory of identity, according to which profoundly held beliefs about the nature of the Self and Others influence the behaviour of states through the prerogatives, anxieties and red-lines they generate. The thesis identifies the telling of national history as the main vehicle for the socialisation of the identity narrative. It then traces the development of the Romanian identity narrative, from its formative years in the nineteenth century to contemporary times, arguing that the sedimentation of its main features is linked to the consistency of its historical narrative. A particular emphasis develops in the Romanian imaginary in terms of prioritising the issues of state security, sovereignty, territorial integrity and unity. The thesis then explores the influence of these elements on Romania's post-socialist behaviour. It focuses firstly on the transition period, when identity-related prerogatives resulted both in a desire for Euro-Atlantic integration, but also in an anxiety towards change at domestic level which acted as an obstacle to the realisation of these international goals in the first half of the 1990s. Secondly, the thesis investigates the nature of three relationships critical to Romania's foreign policy agenda – those with Russia, Hungary and the Republic of Moldova. Overall the thesis shows that there exists a noticeable pattern of behaviour which conforms with Romania's identity-driven anxieties and prerogatives, particularly in the current volatile environment. Whilst relations with Russia and Hungary are marked by attitudes of anxiety and distrust, that with Moldova is characterised by an affinity rooted in their shared identity markers. This makes Romania acutely sensitive to recent regional developments and has resulted in the state's adapting its behaviour towards these three actors in order to alleviate its identity-related anxieties concerning security, unity and independence, not only of itself, but also of Moldova.

Table of Contents

TABLES AND FIGURES	5
LIST OF TABLES.....	5
LIST OF FIGURES WITH SOURCE ATTRIBUTION.....	5
INTRODUCTION	6
CASE-STUDY AND CONTEXT.....	9
STRUCTURE OF THE THESIS.....	15
CONCLUDING REMARKS.....	18
CHAPTER 1. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND	20
INTRODUCTION	20
AT THE CROSSROADS OF STRATEGIC CULTURE AND FOREIGN POLICY ANALYSIS	20
STRATEGIC CULTURE (SC)	21
FOREIGN POLICY ANALYSIS (FPA)	36
LIMITATIONS OF SC AND FPA AND THE CONTRIBUTION OF THIS THESIS TO THE FIELD	48
<i>SC and the Study of Identity.....</i>	<i>49</i>
<i>The Agent-Structure Debate</i>	<i>51</i>
<i>The Utility of a ‘Small State’ Case Study</i>	<i>55</i>
CONCLUSION	57
CHAPTER 2. METHODS – APPROACH AND CONSIDERATIONS.....	59
EMPLOYING A CONSTRUCTIVIST APPROACH	59
METHODOLOGY	65
<i>A Note on Interviews and Romanian Sources</i>	<i>65</i>
<i>The Nature and Content of the Romanian Identity Narrative</i>	<i>66</i>
<i>The Influence of Identity on Behaviour</i>	<i>72</i>
CONCLUSION	75
CHAPTER 3. ROMANIAN HISTORY AND IDENTITY – A NATIONAL OBSESSION WITH UNIQUENESS	79
INTRODUCTION	79
THE CONTINUITY OF THE ROMANIAN IDENTITY NARRATIVE	80
ANTIQUITY – FOUNDATION MYTHS: ORIGINS, HABITUS, RELIGION	82
<i>Origins</i>	<i>82</i>
<i>Habitus.....</i>	<i>83</i>
<i>Religion</i>	<i>85</i>
THE MEDIEVAL ERA AND EARLY MODERNITY – THE ‘BESIEGED FORTRESS’	86
<i>The Three Provinces</i>	<i>88</i>
<i>Transylvania – Hungary as the Essential Other</i>	<i>88</i>
<i>Wallachia and Moldavia.....</i>	<i>92</i>
THE MODERN ERA – THE THEME OF UNITY.....	94
<i>The Birth of Romanian National Identity – Unity.....</i>	<i>94</i>
<i>The Essential Others and Need for Identity Narrative Continuity.....</i>	<i>100</i>
THE COMMUNIST PERIOD	103
<i>Ceausescu and the Weaponising of Romanian National Identity.....</i>	<i>103</i>
<i>The Others in Ceausescu’s Romania</i>	<i>107</i>
CONCLUSION – STRUCTURE, AGENCY AND ROMANIAN IDENTITY	110
CHAPTER 4. CONTINUITY RATHER THAN CHANGE – ROMANIA’S NATIONAL IDENTITY IN THE TRANSITION ERA	114
INTRODUCTION	114
ROMANIA IN 1989	115
ROMANIA IN EARLY TRANSITION – ION ILIESCU AND THE USE OF IDENTITY AS ELECTORAL TOOL	117

ROMANIA'S CONTEMPORARY IDENTITY NARRATIVE – CONTINUITY ONCE MORE	123
ROMANIA IN THE TRANSITION ERA – FOREIGN POLICY DIRECTION AND DOMESTIC REFORM	128
<i>Desire to Join the West – Stronger commitment towards NATO.....</i>	<i>128</i>
<i>Obstacles to Accession – Resistance to Change and Insistence on State Sovereignty.....</i>	<i>132</i>
THE RETREAT OF IDENTITARY ANXIETIES IN THE MID-1990S.....	140
CONCLUSION	142
CHAPTER 5. ROMANIA'S RELATIONSHIP WITH RUSSIA – SURVIVING IN THE SHADOW OF THE GREAT EASTERN POWER	144
INTRODUCTION	144
A NOTE ON ROMANIA'S CONTEMPORARY FOREIGN POLICY AND THE CURRENT INTERNATIONAL CLIMATE	145
ROMANIA'S IDENTITY DRIVEN ATTITUDE TOWARDS RUSSIA – DISTRUST, FEAR AND ANXIETY OVER SECURITY AND INDEPENDENCE	148
RUSSO-ROMANIAN RELATIONS DURING THE TRANSITION PERIOD.....	152
CONTEMPORARY RUSSO-ROMANIAN RELATIONS	158
FUTURE DIRECTIONS FOR RUSSO-ROMANIAN RELATIONS	169
CONCLUSION	174
CHAPTER 6. ROMANIA'S RELATIONSHIP WITH HUNGARY – MANAGING A LEGACY OF A THOUSAND YEARS OF CONFLICT AND DISCORD.....	176
INTRODUCTION	176
ROMANIA'S IDENTITY DRIVEN ATTITUDE TOWARDS HUNGARY – DISTRUST AND ANXIETY OVER TERRITORIAL INTEGRITY AND SOVEREIGNTY.....	177
HUNGARIAN-ROMANIAN RELATIONS DURING THE TRANSITION PERIOD	181
CONTEMPORARY HUNGARIAN-ROMANIAN RELATIONS	190
FUTURE DIRECTIONS FOR HUNGARIAN-ROMANIAN RELATIONS	199
CONCLUSION	203
CHAPTER 7. ROMANIA'S RELATIONSHIP WITH THE REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA – TWO STATES, ONE PEOPLE?	205
INTRODUCTION	205
ROMANIA'S IDENTITY DRIVEN ATTITUDE TOWARDS THE REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA – AFFINITY FOR THE ESTRANGED SELF	206
MOLDO-ROMANIAN RELATIONS DURING THE TRANSITION PERIOD	210
CONTEMPORARY MOLDO-ROMANIAN RELATIONS	217
FUTURE DIRECTIONS FOR MOLDO-ROMANIAN RELATIONS	225
CONCLUSION	232
CONCLUSION	234
FINAL CONSIDERATIONS	240
DIRECTIONS FOR THE FUTURE	244
BIBLIOGRAPHY	246

Tables and Figures

List of Tables

Major Events of Romanian History and Identity Narrative Themes	67
Major Events of Romanian Contemporary History.....	102

List of Figures with Source Attribution

Figure 1. The main periods of Romanian history and their corresponding themes.....	69
Figure 2. Map of modern day Romania (1945-).....	73
Source: Romania Mare (Judete si Regiuni Istorice) [Greater Romania (Counties and Historical Regions)] in <i>Henius Atlas</i> (Leipzig: Kartographische Anstalt von F.A. Brockhaus, 1926), Copyright: Public Domain, available from <i>Wikimedia Commons</i> , Category: Old Maps of Romania, uploaded by Olahus, 06.12.2007, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Romania_Mare_(judete_si_regiuni_istorice).JPG [accessed 13 December 2016].	
Figure 3. Map of the Old Kingdom (1859-1918).....	87
Source: Ibid.	
Figure 4. Map of Greater Romania (1918-1940).....	88
Source: Ibid.	
Figure 5. Map of Territorial Losses of 1940.....	90
Source: Ibid.	
Figure 6. Map of the Republic of Moldova.....	196
Source: Cepleanu, S.I., <i>Moldova Today</i> , Copyright: Creative Commons Share Alike 3.0 Unported, available from <i>Wikimedia Commons</i> , 12.11.2011, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:MoldovaToday.png [accessed 09 January 2017].	

Introduction

*Awaken, Romanian, from your deadly slumber
In which barbaric tyrants have sunk you
Now or never fashion a new destiny
To which even your cruel enemies will bow.*

*Now or never let us prove to this world
That through this hands Roman blood still flows
And in our chests we proudly hold a name
Victorious in battle, the name of Trajan.*

*Watch, mighty shadows, Michael, Stephen, Corvin
The Romanian nation, your great-grandchildren,
Weapons in arms, your fire through their veins,
'Life in freedom or death' all shout.*

*Priests with crucifixes at the helm, as the army is Christian
The aim is freedom and its sacred goal
We would rather die fighting, in full glory
Than become slaves again in our ancient land.¹*

The verses above are from a poem by Andrei Muresanu, a Transylvanian Romanian poet and political activist, written in the context of the 1848 Pan-European revolutions. Later put to music, the hymn became known as *Awaken, Romanian* and was adopted as Romania's national anthem in the aftermath of the anti-communist insurrection of 1989. Despite its inherent patriotism, or perhaps because of it, these verses tell us something about what Romanians have understood, across the centuries, to be essential features of their character and history. There are hints to a Roman origin, a link is drawn between present and past generations, and a picture of a troubled history awaiting vindication is painted. To someone familiar with Romania's history the fact that the figures mentioned come from the state's three provinces –

¹ A. Muresanu, 'Un Rasunet [An Echo],' originally published in *Foaie pentru minte* XI:25, 21 June 1848 (pagination unknown), in C. Bodea (ed.), *1848 la Romani – o Istorie in Date si Marturii [1848 for Romanians – a History in Dates and Testimonies]* (Bucharest: Editura Stiintifica si Enciclopedica, 1982), pp.506-507.

Wallachia, Moldavia and Transylvania, respectively – is, itself, symbolic. This poem constitutes a call to arms, an invitation for Romanians everywhere to awaken, realise their destiny of unity and independence and avenge a history in which they have been separated and oppressed by foreign powers. In 1848, the stanzas stood for a desideratum. In 2017, nearly one hundred years since it became a reality, they have not lost their salience. Indeed, as lyrics to the national anthem, they serve as a reminder of past struggles, as well as offering a snapshot of what it is, and what it has always been, to be Romanian. The anthem has pride of place in Romanian public life – it is played, according to law, at official ceremonies and festivities, at the beginning of each session of Parliament, and even, as this author may confirm, at the start of every school-day of the primary and secondary cycles.² Additionally, each school textbook of Romanian history and language must feature on its first page the exact verses reproduced above.³

This study began with the self-evident fact that national identity is a constitutive feature of Romanians. The portrayal of the Self, its characteristics and the priorities which flow from them, are significant to this people. More importantly, these representations both reflect and shape the manner in which Romanians view the world and their place within it. The notion that Romanians are a Latin, Orthodox people, who have fought for unity and independence, creates a particular image of the role, or even destiny, that their state has. Put simply, this role is, much like that of any nation-state, to protect the Romanian nation, both physically and culturally, and foster its development. However, understanding how the specific goals and priorities of this state are set, or the manner in which it relates to other actors, requires an in-depth knowledge of the peculiarities created by Romanians' stories about their national identity, the priorities and anxieties, the attitudes and red-lines they generate. These

² Parliament of Romania, *Law nr. 75/1994*, Article 10, published in the *Official Journal of Romania* 237 (26 August 1994), available from *Monitorul Juridic* [n.d.] <http://www.monitoruljuridic.ro/act/lege-nr-75-din-16-iulie-1994-privind-arborarea-drapelului-romaniei-intonarea-imnului-national-si-folosirea-sigiliilor-cu-stema-romaniei-de-catre-autoritatile-si-institutiile-publice-4303.html> [accessed 05 January 2017].

³ *Law nr. 75/1994*. On a different note, Article 13 of the same law stipulates that the anthem may only be reproduced in Romanian. As such, there are no official translations of the verses at the beginning of this chapter, and, consequently, the translation is the author's own and the source to which it is attributed is the poem, rather than the anthem itself.

will be unique to Romania, as its historical experiences and the manner in which they have been framed through its narrative on identity will be exclusive to it. The rationale behind certain types of behaviour, therefore, is connected to, and indivisible from, the precepts which emerge from the story of national identity. In other words, behaviour is inextricably linked to identity, because the latter forms the lens through which Romanians appraise their environment.

This thesis, therefore, has at its core the conception that identity matters in the articulation of Romania's interests and preferences but also in perceptions of other actors' actions. In other words, the project takes the view that it is through stories about 'who we are' that Romanians are able to make sense of the world around them and that, as a result, the narrative on identity constitutes the inter-subjective reality within which the state functions. As a result, accounting for the state's behaviour requires grasping the essential tenets of the Romanian national identity narrative and assessing their influence on its actions. As such, this project's main research question is 'What is the impact of the national identity on Romania's post-socialist foreign policy agenda?' Its aim is to add another layer of understanding to the motivations behind state behaviour by adopting an identity-based perspective. What is of interest, firstly, are the answers Romanians have given to the questions of 'who we are,' 'what is important to us,' and 'who our Others are.' These will offer clues as to the nature and content of the identity narrative, as well as the types of interests that draw on it, and will allow for an evaluation of the international environment through the Romanian lens. On the other hand, assessing its impact on behaviour entails overlaying this image over contemporary events and tracing when, where, and to what extent the attitudes, priorities and red-lines that flow from this narrative come into play. Overall, the aim of the project is to show that there exists a discernible pattern of behaviour which follows a specific rationale conforming with Romania's identity-based prerogatives.

The present endeavour is, therefore, a multi-disciplinary study which engages with issues of identity, history, sociology, foreign and domestic affairs. It aims to explain how stories about Romanian identity have developed and been perpetuated and also,

more importantly, how they feed into present day behaviour. The aim is to show that the national identity narrative, amongst other factors, like external pressures, acts to influence state action in a manner which has rarely been accounted for by research into Romanian foreign policy. In a sense, this project brings together two hitherto largely separate enterprises – Romanians' own interest in defining 'what it means to be Romanian' which has generally taken the form of sociological, anthropological or psychological works, and efforts, which are fairly rare in the West, to explain Romania's foreign policy direction after 1989. By combining the two, the thesis will shed light on the motivations behind Romania's actions which, whilst they may appear obvious from inside Romania, are difficult to comprehend from the outside or have been over simplified by rationalist or materialist explanations. The avenue offered into the study of state behaviour by an identity perspective is not an altogether novel one, but its application to the Romanian case is, particularly outside of its borders. Bringing Romania in to the fold, however, is a useful undertaking not only because it fills a gap in the research by examining a state which is seldom the subject of study, but also because it paints a more accurate picture of the inter-state relations and conflicts which are currently in play in Eastern Europe, as the following section will show.

Case-Study and Context

The scope of this thesis places it at the confluence of Strategic Culture (SC) and Foreign Policy Analysis (FPA), within the specific field of constructivist studies on the influence of national identity/culture on state international behaviour. The present endeavour seeks to add to a growing, if still underdeveloped, area of research. SC has had a traditional interest in the study of culture as a variable impacting on behaviour, and its focus has generally been on, as the name suggests, the strategic sphere, especially concerning the use of force. Research into political culture⁴ or, more broadly, national culture, are rare and even those tend to emphasise the strategy aspect.⁵ On the other side, works on identity within FPA are a more recent development, due at least in part

⁴ See Duffield (1999).

⁵ See Berger (1996) or Gray (2007).

to the constructivist shift which began in the 1990s. Both schools, however, have tended to prioritise case studies concerning great powers and, consequently, the spotlight has rarely fallen on small states, as both Rasmussen within SC and Browning in FPA have pointed out.⁶ The present thesis, therefore, aims to add to the field by focusing on Romania, a medium-sized former socialist state within Eastern Europe.

There exists a view, implied in the emphasis on large powers, that smaller states provide less useful case studies, as they are on the receiving, rather than generating, end of the regional or world order. In other words, that the behaviour of small states is to a large extent dictated by the activities of the great powers which dominate regionally or internationally. This is true to a point. It is not the intention of this thesis to argue that Romania has the same freedom of action as Russia or the United States, or even its allies in Western Europe. Instead, one acknowledges that external pressures are more powerfully felt by small states than they are by great powers. Having said that, the project rejects the notion that the behaviour of small states is only determined by the global balance of power, or, indeed, that all small states' priorities are set externally. Instead, it holds the view that, not only is the study of small states a useful endeavour because minor actors have just as strong a sense of their own identity as greater ones, but that they do, in the current context of a globalised and inter-connected world, have the ability to impact the regional, if not international, order.

With this in mind, a case study of Romania's motivations for behaviour is both worthwhile, and, more importantly, a propitious enterprise. Firstly, Romania provides the opportune context in which to explore the influence of identity narratives on behaviour. Despite being a small and relatively young nation, Romanians have developed a particularly powerful sense of identity which has been perpetuated across several generations to the point that its main features have become sedimented. Indeed, one of the hallmarks of the Romanian identity narrative is its historic continuity. As such, this thesis argues, in the specific areas in which it functions, such as ensuring the physical integrity of the state, or prioritising certain relationships over

⁶ See Rasmussen (2005) and Browning (2008).

others, the influence of the narrative is particularly potent, and more difficult to offset by external pressures. Tracing the influence of stories on identity in these instances is not only empirically more straightforward, but also shows how powerful the connection between identity narratives and behaviour can be, to the extent to which identity-related prerogatives dominate motivations for state action in certain areas.

On the other hand, the state of affairs within Eastern Europe also warrants this type of investigation. The regional climate at the moment is, in many ways, one of uncertainty over the future and there are two fronts, in particular, which deserve mention. Firstly, Russia's annexation of Crimea (2014) and continued involvement within the affairs of Ukraine in the Donbas has unsettled the equilibrium of Eastern Europe and put into question the security and stability of the region. Beyond the fact that Russia's actions threaten the sovereignty and integrity of one of the largest states in the European Union neighbourhood, the crisis in Ukraine is arguably one of the most pressing challenges faced by the EU and NATO since the end of the Cold War. These developments have revealed the lack of efficiency of European strategic policy towards the neighbourhood and Russia, as well as the difficulties, inherent to a certain extent to the European project, of reaching an unanimous decision on a particular course of action. The annexation of Crimea and ensuing conflict have been met with a slowness in reaction on the side of European states, but also varying degrees of threat perception. A difference in position is apparent between states with tight economic links to Moscow and others, particularly on the eastern flank, where the proximity of the conflict is acutely felt and memories of an expansionist Russia are still vivid. While the EU has put in place economic sanctions against Russia, the lack of consensus on what constitutes a measured and effective response continues. Efforts to establish a framework for more profound strategic cooperation between EU states are nascent, and as such, for the number of states, Romania included, who perceive Russian actions as an imminent threat to themselves and the Western system of alliances, NATO provides the more effective avenue to counterbalance Moscow's revived expansionism. It is questionable, however, whether NATO's increased presence in the region and the strategic support offered to its Eastern flank allies does not serve Russia's own interests, if one were to assume Moscow wishes to see a return to the

Cold War spheres of influence. Overall, the crisis in Ukraine has created dissension amongst European states and, particularly in Eastern Europe, a climate of uncertainty and suspicion, in which old tensions and anxieties have been brought to the fore.

The second front concerns Hungary, and in particular the actions and rhetoric of its right-wing government, led by prime-minister Viktor Orban. Over the last few years, Hungary has been a disruptive force within the EU and NATO. Beginning with a nationalist shift, particularly the decrying of the Treaty of Trianon (1920) – which saw the dissolution of the Kingdom of Hungary and a significant loss of territory to its neighbours – and the policy of awarding of Hungarian citizenship to its diaspora in contiguous states (2010), Orban has unsettled his EU and NATO eastern partners, not least Romania. Budapest's seeking of closer relations with Russia, especially in the context of the crisis in Ukraine has also cast doubt on the state's commitment to the EU and NATO. This divergence is all the more significant as it comes against a backdrop of increased regional tensions with Russia and, more broadly, as questions are being raised about the effectiveness of the EU and NATO in responding to contemporary security challenges. The theory of Trojan Horse Hungary, in other words of Hungary as a destabilising pro-Russian element from within the two alliances, is one of increasing concern to members of the EU and NATO, particularly in Eastern Europe. The picture revealed is not only of a rift building between the region and Russia, but also amongst actors within the Eastern flank itself. Altogether, these developments mean that the situation in Eastern Europe is of an equilibrium teetering on the edge and, as such, understanding the motivations behind the behaviour of a state of strategic importance in the region is a useful endeavour.

Indeed, within this melee Romania occupies a central role. Firstly, it is one of the largest – second to Poland – states in the Eastern flank. Additionally, it is placed at the edge of the EU and NATO and the European neighbourhood, bordering Ukraine to the north and the Republic of Moldova to the east. Furthermore, since the outbreak of the Ukrainian crisis, its access to the Black Sea has increased in significance due to the proximity of Romania's coastline to the Crimean Peninsula. Finally, it also borders Hungary to the West, meaning that this state's eastern and nationalist shift have been

most acutely felt in Bucharest. Harnessing its strategic position, Romania plays a pivotal role in the EU and NATO's response to the two issues mentioned above. In what concerns Russia, it has been one of the states, alongside Poland and the Baltic countries most prominently, to decry the EU's soft approach and request greater NATO involvement in the region. Amongst the steps undertaken one would highlight the building of an anti-ballistic missile shield which became operational in 2016, the establishment of a permanent NATO office on its territory, and the increasing number of naval exercises which are taking place in the Black Sea. Its stance on Russia's aggression of Ukraine has been one of the most aggressive, as Romania has supported the pro-Western direction of former Soviet states and closer cooperation between Western organisations and the EU neighbourhood. On this front, Romania has also aimed to buttress its relationship with the Republic of Moldova and secure this state's independence from Russia. On the other hand, Bucharest has also been most critical of Hungary's nationalist rhetoric and its pursuit of closer ties with Moscow.

However, although Romania's position is evident from the empirical evidence, understanding the motivations behind its foreign policy and, consequently, its broader repercussions, requires an in-depth analysis of the manner in which the narrative on identity has fed into the state's behaviour. That is because, this thesis argues, Romania's actions are not only rooted in contemporary concerns over regional security and stability. Instead, this project will show how Romania's foreign policy agenda and, more specifically, its response to Russia and Hungary's actions, are informed by identity-based anxieties and priorities which have made it particularly sensitive to these developments. Romania's portrayal of the Self and Russia and Hungary as Others offers an avenue into understanding the state's behaviour towards them, beyond over simplified rationalist and materialist explanations which may focus on alignment with its more powerful allies or self-interest maximisation. The benefit of this novel approach is that it sheds light on the rationale of particular actions, such as Romania's attempts to strengthen its relationship with the Republic of Moldova at the cost of increasing tensions between itself and Russia, which may be perceived as counterintuitive otherwise. What will be revealed is a complex tableau of the identity-based motivations which underpin Romania's behaviour and make it not a follower of

the general direction pushed by others, but an autonomous actor in a position to harness its strategic position to pursue specific goals.

However, precisely because of its strategic importance, Romania's actions may have wider and profound repercussions on the inner stability of the EU and NATO but also consequences in terms of the quality of relations between these organisations and Russia. The thesis will argue that identity-based anxieties over Hungary's actions have led to a growing rift between Bucharest and Budapest which, in the current context, should be of utmost concern in regards to the two states' capacity to cooperate efficiently in responding to the security challenges threatening the region. Similarly, the growing tensions between Romania and Russia caused, on the one hand by the hard-line response from Bucharest on the issue of the annexation of Crimea, and the pursuit of tighter links between Romania and the Republic of Moldova on the other, reveal Romania's stance as more aggressive towards Russia than that of many of its allies, and out of step with the general line pursued by its Western European partners. The implications may be that its response to future developments in the region might deviate even further from the direction prescribed by its allies to a point at which Romania's behaviour itself will constitute a challenge to the region's security and stability. Various scenarios including a potential *ad hoc* unification with the Republic of Moldova in the context of a scaling up of Moscow's involvement in its affairs, for instance, would pose serious questions of the EU and NATO, as well as Russia, in terms of reaction and may further destabilise the fragile equilibrium which exists within Eastern Europe currently. In this context, understanding the motivations behind Romania's behaviour becomes an ever more useful and necessary endeavour.

Overall, this project aims to highlight the influence of the Romanian identity narrative on its post-socialist behaviour, and its impact on the relationships built and pursued with its significant Others, namely Russia, Hungary and the Republic of Moldova. It will reveal how the identity narrative has created particular priorities and anxieties which have made Romania a model EU and NATO partner but, in the context of current developments, may lead it to deviate from complete alignment with its allies. More importantly, it will show that there exists a pattern of behaviour the rationality of

which is linked to the prerogatives set by its identity narrative. From this perspective, the thesis may account for Romania's current actions as well as make certain assumptions about its future foreign policy direction, contingent on the continuation of present circumstances. The benefit of the present enterprise is that it provides a case study of a state critical to the stability of the region, but also, in so doing, provides a snapshot of some of the inter-state relationships which exist in Eastern Europe at the moment. The advantage of this approach, however, is that it not only captures the nature of these relations as traditional accounts may, but offers them a specific depth by exploring their historic context and the manner in which Romania's representations of the Self and Other have fed into present interactions. By pursuing the task from this angle, it is hoped, the complexity of the state of affairs within Eastern Europe, as well as Romania's role within it, will be revealed.

Structure of the Thesis

The project is organised with the purpose of answering the main research question, 'What is the impact of national identity on Romania's post-socialist foreign policy agenda?' As such, the thesis begins with a chapter dedicated to the theoretical background and aimed at setting the work in its research field. This contains a discussion of the two main strands within which the thesis fits, SC and FPA and their convergence in the specific area of constructivist studies which investigate identity/culture and their link to state behaviour. The chapter examines the research already existing in the field and the limitations of the two approaches in concerns to the focus and approach of their study. Finally, the section outlines the project's position on a number of issues relevant to its scope where either its perspective differs from others within the field or over which there exists disagreement, and the contribution to knowledge of the present endeavour is demonstrated. This chapter is followed by a section on methods, in which the project's approach to the study of identity is expanded upon and the thesis is located in existing debates on constructivism taking place in IR. Following on from this, the methodology of the project is outlined, with a focus on its two-step approach, namely of investigating the

nature and content of the Romanian identity narrative, succeeded by an analysis of its influence over the state's international behaviour.

Subsequent to these theoretical discussions, the project moves into its substantive sections. Chapter 3, 'Romanian History and Identity' is concerned with exploring the Romanian narrative on identity and its historical development. This section examines the dominant representations of the Self and Others, the sources of these portrayals, and how they have been perpetuated across the generations. A link is constructed between Romania's historical and identity narratives, particularly in terms of how historical experience has been interpreted and used in the creation of identity representations. The chapter examines the major themes of the Romanian narrative on identity as they emerged in the formative period of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, highlighting their perpetuation in the modern narrative. A chronological structure, focused on the main periods of Romania's history, organises these themes according to the eras within the historical narrative in which they were prevalent. Overall, this chapter aims to portray the manner in which these themes build on one another and come together to create a particular representation of the Self and Others in modern times. The role of external circumstances, namely the actions of the Others Hungary and Russia, and of agency, particularly that of Nicolae Ceaușescu's regime, are explored in the context of the unusual degree of continuity of the Romanian identity narrative.

Chapter 4, 'Continuity rather than Change,' is the point of crossover between the two steps in the thesis' approach. The section brings the analysis of the nature and content of Romanian identity narrative in the contemporary era, namely after the 1989 anti-communist revolution. It examines how claims about Romanian identity were utilised by reformed communists, led by Ion Iliescu, in securing early electoral victories and popular legitimacy. In so doing, the chapter also addresses the issue of the perpetuation of the identity narrative, with the notable deletion of the communist period, into the present day, ascribing the agency of Iliescu's governments a crucial role. On the other hand, this chapter also analyses the identity narrative's influence on Romania's international behaviour, with particular emphasis on its goal to join the

Western community by acceding to the EU and NATO. Its international efforts are contrasted with the resistance to change noticeable in its domestic policy agenda on the issue of internal reform during the first half of the 1990s, on the success of which the achievement of its foreign policy prerogatives was contingent. Overall, this chapter will show how the Romanian identity narrative and the continuity of its major features were both at the root of the state's international agenda, but also constituted an obstacle in its realisation.

The following three chapters are dedicated to the examination of three relationships crucial to Romania's foreign policy: those with Russia, Hungary and the Republic of Moldova. All sections have a similar structure, focused on tracing the influence of the narrative and the anxieties and priorities which flow from it on the relations established with these three actors. Each chapter begins with an examination of the particular attitude Romania has towards these states, as informed by its identity narrative and historical interactions. Subsequently, the chapters examine the three relationships throughout the transition era and up to the present day, by accounting for the major events which have shaped them. The aim is to track the influence of these attitudes in relation to the changes in the international environment and actors' own priorities. It will be shown that, given the opportune circumstances, identity factors may either retreat or become augmented, hinting at the notion that the degree of impact the identity narrative on behaviour is contingent on both external and domestic circumstances. In this exercise, current developments in Ukraine, Hungary and the Republic of Moldova are of particular interest. The main argument will be that the contemporary climate is such that identity attitudes and prerogatives have an especially powerful influence on Romania's current and potentially future behaviour. Finally, each chapter offers a prediction of the future relationship between Romania and the three states, as well as Romania's general foreign policy direction more broadly, based on a continuation of present circumstances. These are based on scenarios considered by Romanian elites as plausible developments within the regional environment.

The final chapter of the thesis is a concluding section. Here the arguments put forward by the project as a whole are brought together in a manner which highlights the benefit of studying Romania's behaviour by working at the junction between SC and FPA from an identity-based perspective. The chapter outlines which elements the thesis has borrowed from either school of thought and how studying identity from this middle ground serves to paint a more accurate picture of the complex rationale behind Romania's post-socialist foreign policy agenda. Furthermore, this section compiles the evidence presented in the thesis to show that there exists a discernible pattern noticeable in Romania's behaviour which follows a particular rationale conforming to Romania's identity-based prerogatives. The conclusion also discusses certain potential issues concerning the present research approach.

Concluding Remarks

This project set out four years ago to paint a more accurate picture of the motivations behind Romania's behaviour, in the knowledge that past studies had seldom taken identity into account. The aim was originally to show that the manner in which Romania negotiates its role within the international organisations it is a member of, as well as its relationships with its three Others, is not simply determined by the international balance of power. More specifically, the remit was to prove that Romania, as an actor, has a certain depth and equates to more than the label of medium-sized state in Eastern Europe. Romania would be portrayed as an autonomous entity, shaped but not defined by its alliances; or 'defined' only to the extent to which membership of the EU and NATO is the result of a pursuit of its own, specific foreign policy goals. This is still one of the aims of the thesis.

However, since this project began, the international environment has altered significantly, adding, in a sense, to the scope of the project. Its remit was always to show that Romania views both Russia and Hungary as threatening Others, and the Republic of Moldova as an Estranged Self and that its foreign policy goals in relation to these actors would be shaped accordingly. Romania would pursue the bolstering of its cooperation with NATO in order to guard itself from Russia, maintain cordial but not close relations with Hungary and aim to strengthen its link to the Republic of Moldova.

Although in many ways confirming the original assumptions, events of recent years, particularly the crisis in Ukraine and Budapest's marked change in rhetoric and behaviour, alter the context of this thesis' arguments. Through its strategic position, but also its own actions, Romania has placed itself at the heart of these developments and is now playing an increasingly critical role in the region's stability. It has, perhaps, found the niche for itself it had been searching for since the times Ceausescu made a stand on behalf of his state against the actions of the Soviet Union.

In any case, this endeavour is offered additional utility by the current international climate. Whilst it still shows the capacity of a small state to develop a distinct sense of identity and its ability to pursue a particular foreign policy agenda peculiar to its internal prerogatives, it also now sheds light on the potential impact a small state might have on the regional equilibrium. Romania not only speaks and acts for itself; its behaviour has repercussions on the wider international organisations it is a member of. Its relationship with Russia affects, by extension, the nature and quality of the dialogue between these actors and Moscow. Similarly, Romania's pursuit of closer relations with the Republic of Moldova should be seen as an affinity between a member of the EU and NATO and a state still part of Russia's sphere of influence. Discord between Romania and Hungary equates to an internal rift between the EU and NATO. Whilst this was always the case, in light of recent events these considerations gain further significance. If the situation in Eastern Europe can be qualified as a fragile equilibrium, then the issue of Romania's behaviour becomes ever more salient. In this vein, understanding the motivations behind what Romania does, as well as what it might do in the future, is more important today than it was four years ago. That is because now, in the context of the various security and political challenges faced by Eastern Europe, Romania is in a position to affect the effectiveness of the EU and NATO as well as their relationship with Russia. The concluding remark of this section, therefore, would be that endeavours such as this are of particular utility in contemporary times, when the actions of even a small state may impact the international environment in times of crisis.

Chapter 1. Theoretical Background

Introduction

This chapter outlines the theoretical background of the thesis, locating it in the area of International Relations studies in which Foreign Policy Analysis and Strategic Culture overlap. More specifically, this field contains constructivist Strategic Culture studies which go beyond the school's traditionally narrow focus on military strategy, examining the impact of political culture on state behaviour more generally, and constructivist approaches within Foreign Policy Analysis which deal specifically with national identity. The chapter examines each of the developments within the two schools in turn, with a focus on the manner in which identity is conceptualised and studied. Following from this, the limitations of the two approaches and, in this context, the thesis' own position on certain issues, such as its conception of identity and the structure-agency debate, is outlined. Finally, the contribution to the field the thesis brings will be explored, particularly in regards to the notion that, by focusing on a minor power such as Romania, the project addresses a gap in the research and paints a more accurate picture of the inter-state relationships which exist in Eastern Europe.

At the Crossroads of Strategic Culture and Foreign Policy Analysis

This thesis explores the link between identity and Romania's post-socialist foreign policy agenda and, in so doing, aims to add another layer of understanding to the motivations behind state behaviour. The project therefore finds itself at the confluence between the study of identity/culture and that of foreign policy. What is more, the project views national identity as a social construct, a shared system of beliefs or a narrative about who the Self is, how it came to be that way, what its values and priorities, both domestic and international, are. A sense of identity develops as a result of an accumulation of socio-historical experiences – or, more specifically, their subjective interpretation – as well as the actor's relations with and positioning in contrast to Others. What national identity provides is a subjective perception of reality, a lens through which a state or people, in this case Romania, views the world and its place within it. This thesis, therefore, employs a constructivist approach to

state behaviour, in which narratives on identity, often unwittingly, shape the decision-making process by influencing the goals pursued by states, but also their appraisal of specific contexts, which may be perceived as especially threatening or favourable.

This position locates the thesis in the field of constructivist cultural studies of states which identify culture or identity as having specific implications for foreign policy.

There are two specific traditions engaging with this agenda within which this project may be situated: Strategic Culture (SC) and Foreign Policy Analysis (FPA). In the case of both, the end of the Cold War and, more recently, the 9/11 terrorist attacks,⁷ have sparked renewed interest in the connection between identity and behaviour. Having said that, both in terms of scope and approach, the two fields differ significantly – while SC traditionally has a narrower focus on culture influencing a state's strategic use of force and predominantly champions the importance of structure, FPA casts a wider net in analysing foreign policy decision making in general and emphasises the role of agency. Furthermore, what will also become clear is the two traditions make very different claims about identity and the manner in which it should be approached. However, as the following section will explore, as with most schools of thought, SC and FPA are not completely homogenous and it is in the area of overlap that the type of study attempted here fits in.

Strategic Culture (SC)

Originally developed in 1977 by Jack Snyder in an attempt to utilise the national culture variable in order to explain the different strategies employed by the Soviet Union in contrast to the United States during the Cold War,⁸ SC is an eclectic cluster of theories examining, at the most fundamental level, “the relevance of ‘cultural context’ in influencing strategic preferences.”⁹ In other words, SC's main aim has been to “integrate [within security studies] cultural influences about how actors within the

⁷ See, for instance, Hudson (2013) and Lantis (2009).

⁸ J. Snyder, *The Soviet Strategic Culture: Implications for Limited Nuclear Operations*, R-2154-AF (Santa Monica: Rand Publications, 1977).

⁹ S. Poore, ‘Strategic Culture,’ in J. Glenn, D. Howlett and S. Poore (eds), *Neorealism versus Strategic Culture* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2004), p.45.

international system made decisions regarding the use of force.”¹⁰ The point of convergence of all strategic culturalists is a rejection of the rationalism and materialism of traditional perspectives, such as (Neo)realism and Neoliberalism. Indeed, SC defines itself as a school which takes “the realist edifice as target.”¹¹ At the root of their challenge is a questioning of the manner in which identity and culture are treated and the extent to which the influence of these factors on policy articulation is accounted for by mainstream perspectives. Of particular concern to culturalists are the logic of anarchy and universalism fundamental to these approaches in general, and to Neorealism in particular. They take as deeply problematic the notion that the behaviour of states is solely attributable to the anarchic structure of the international system and the distribution of material capabilities. The treatment of states as ‘like units,’ stripped bare of any of their unique characteristics, implies that state identities are exogenously given and their interests are limited to a desire to survive under the pressures of the international structure. The assumption, however, that states are essentially utility maximisers is unsatisfactory to strategic culturalists who have pointed to the “shortcomings in ahistorical and non-cultural structural models”¹² in predicting and explaining state behaviour. Instead of this impoverished conception of identity, SC emphasises “the influence of the domestic cultural context on (...) behaviour.”¹³

However, despite its intuitively attractive approach to explaining state strategic behaviour, SC failed, in its early phase, to enter the mainstream of international relations theory – as Glenn *et al* have put it, SC spent the Cold War “languish[ing] in neorealism’s shadow.”¹⁴ This has, at least partly, been put down to its heterogeneity in terms of scope and level of analysis – whether the focus of study should be military, political or organizational culture – or, indeed, how to operationalize the concept of

¹⁰ C. Greathouse, ‘Examining the Role and Methodology of Strategic Culture,’ *Risk, Hazards & Crisis in Public Policy* 1:1 (2010), p.57.

¹¹ A.I. Johnston, ‘Thinking about Strategic Culture,’ *International Security* 19:4 (Spring 1995), p.41.

¹² Ibid., pp.32-33.

¹³ J. Glenn, D. Howlett and S. Poore (a), ‘Introduction,’ in J. Glenn, D. Howlett and S. Poore (eds), *Neorealism versus Strategic Culture* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2004), p.4.

¹⁴ Ibid., p.3.

'culture.'¹⁵ The result of these internal disparities has been, as Greathouse argued, that "the 30+ years of work developing SC has yielded neither a standard definition nor a common methodological approach to using [it]."¹⁶ The lack of a coherent approach does not, however, mean that this body of work has little to offer the study of international relations. The end of the Cold War and the events of 9/11 have led to a re-evaluation of the importance of national specificity in regards to state behaviour. Understanding and explaining cultural differences seems more worthwhile today, one would argue, than at any time in contemporary history. In this context, SC appears able to address this gap in knowledge, precisely because it holds 'culture' as its main focus and acknowledges the links between it and a state's history and society. Among the common features of variations of SC studies Poore highlights that they "identify specific national tendencies that derive from historical experiences" and that the term itself refers "to collectives, whether military organisations, policy communities or entire societies (...) provid[ing] certain enduring attitudes, assumptions and beliefs (...) which will lead to a particular interpretation of material conditions."¹⁷

In their approach to the study of identity, constructivist SC owes much to the work of Alexander Wendt. Aiming to find a via media between materialist-rationalist perspectives and those of poststructuralism, Wendt brought socially constructed identity to the fore of his systemic theory on the behaviour of states and with it, brought constructivism itself to the table of great debates within IR. As Iver Neumann suggests, "Wendt's work had the great merit of propelling the study of collective identity forward in the sense that he placed it before a wider IR audience."¹⁸ In his influential article *Anarchy is What States Make of It* and later in the seminal *Social Theory of International Politics* Wendt questions Neorealism's logic of anarchy by positing that identities are indeed constructed through social interaction and cannot be treated as exogenously given, nor divorced from the notion of interest. In this view,

¹⁵ The Johnston-Gray debate in the 1990s focused on whether 'culture' as a variable should be evaluated only in its impact on the outcome alone (Johnston), or also the input (Gray). For more detail, see Johnston (1995) and Gray (1999).

¹⁶ Greathouse (2010), p.58.

¹⁷ Poore (2004), p.50.

¹⁸ I. Neumann, *Collective Identity Formation: Self and Other in International Relations - EUI Working Papers* (Florence: European University Institute, 1995), p.28.

“identity is an inherently social definition of the actor grounded in the theories which actors collectively hold about themselves and one another and which constitute the structure of the social world.”¹⁹ Moreover, he adds, these “identities are the basis of interests. Actors do not have a ‘portfolio’ of interests that they carry around independent of social context; instead, they define their interests in the process of defining situations.”²⁰ For Wendt, the social identities of states do not exist prior to their interaction on the international stage and, as such, are a flexible structure open to change.

In this Wendt’s point is that Neorealism’s ‘culture of anarchy’ is not an inescapable feature of the international system, because this and any other state of affairs depends on “how identity gets defined”²¹ through social interaction. It is perfectly plausible therefore, and Wendt goes on to make this argument,²² that cooperation between states is achievable if actors recast their own and others’ identities and institutionalise these through the practice of interaction.²³ In this vein, the behaviour of states towards one another, as well as the interests they pursue, are defined by a process of continuous social learning. For this reason, Wendt is regarded as one of the most influential constructivists within the discipline. Having said that, he does make some important concessions to rationalist-materialist approaches.

Firstly, whereas identity is at the core of Wendt’s work, in his definition of the various identities of states he purposefully separates the international and domestic spheres, and brackets the latter as a subject of analysis. As Wendt himself noted, “some properties of the state are ‘self-organising’ relative to other states (much as rationalists would argue, for whom actor properties are exogenous to the system), and

¹⁹ A. Wendt, ‘Anarchy Is What States Make of It: The Social Construction of Power Politics,’ *International Organization* (Spring 1992) 46:2, p.398.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ M. Zehfuss, ‘Constructivism and Identity – A Dangerous Liaison,’ in S. Guzzini and A. Leander (eds.), *Constructivism and International Relations – Alexander Wendt and his Critics* (London: Routledge, 2006), p.95.

²² Wendt (1992, 1999)

²³ Wendt (1992), p.417.

some are dependent on cultural structures at the systemic level.”²⁴ As a result, his is an “an ‘essentialist’ or ‘weak’ constructivism that leaves the terms, but not the fact, of state individuality open to negotiation.”²⁵ To put this into context, Wendt differentiates between ‘corporate’ and ‘social’ identities. The former exists prior to social interaction and is a stable, unitary and exogenously given type of identity which “refers to the intrinsic qualities that constitute actor individuality” and “has its roots in domestic politics.”²⁶ From this identity emerge several interests which echo those posited by materialist-rationalist approaches: physical survival, autonomy, economic well being, and collective self-esteem.²⁷ States’ ‘social’ identities, on the other hand, “can exist only in relation to others and thus provide a crucial connection for the mutually constitutive relationship between agents and structures. This type of identity is continuously (re)defined in processes of interaction.”²⁸ It is this dimension of identity which is malleable, and which has a bearing on the behaviour of states towards one another within the international system, whereas the domestic realm and the identity which emerges from it are “systematically bracketed.”²⁹

In this, as highlighted by Wendt himself, the theory makes an important concession to materialist-rationalist perspectives. The most obvious consequence in terms of Wendt’s conception of identity is the notion that domestic factors have no impact on inter-state relations nor, indeed, that international interaction may also influence ‘corporate’ identity. The interests created by corporate identity are the same for all states and exist *a priori* to interaction. There is little interest, since this area is bracketed, in inquiring how this identity is constructed, let alone how it is maintained or challenged, whilst the process of ‘social’ identity construction and adaptation are central to Wendt’s theory of identity. The existence of two separate identities of an actor, one internal, stable and exogenously given, the other malleable and existing

²⁴ A. Wendt, ‘Identity and Structural Change in International Politics,’ in Y. Lapid and F. Kratochwil (eds.), *The Return of Culture and Identity in IR Theory* (Boulder, Colorado: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1996), pp.50.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Wendt (1996), p.50.

²⁷ A. Wendt, *Social Theory of International Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010 – original 1999), pp.235-236.

²⁸ Zehfuss (2006), p.98.

²⁹ Wendt (1992), p.423.

solely in the international context, has led to criticism of Wendt's work, particularly from critical constructivists and poststructuralists.³⁰ Having said that, as this section will show, Wendt's theory of identity and his attempt to find a via media between materialist-rationalist perspectives and more critical forms of constructivism and poststructuralism has had great traction amongst strategic culturalists. Although domestic factors are not bracketed by these authors, indeed they are fundamental to their research, their conception of national identities as socially constructed but at the same time stable and unitary echoes Wendt's theory of identity. Whereas strategic culturalists argue that identities are critical to the articulation of strategic and broader foreign policy, the processes through which those identities were constructed generally do not feature in their analyses. They are, in this respect, thoroughgoing structuralists,³¹ much like Wendt himself, showing little interest in agents' role in the shaping of identities.

Having said that, the insight provided by Wendt's theory has contributed to both an expansion and diversification of culturalist studies over the last two decades. One particular direction adopted by a number of strategic culturalists in what Johnston has termed 'the third wave'³² should be highlighted, as it combines a broadening of the field of research with this weaker constructivist approach. As Glenn *et al* point out, the third generation are singled out by "their willingness to consider other aspects of state policy, not just those relating to military factors, which may be influenced by culture."³³ There is an acknowledgment in this that the strategic culture which informs the decisions of elites on security issues must either correspond or be subscribed to an underlying national political culture which impacts society, and, consequently, state behaviour. Duffield, for instance, argued that traditional understandings of SC, which are concerned with "military strategy, especially nuclear strategy, and the use of force" preclude the applicability of the approach "to the full range of state behaviours

³⁰ On this see Zehfuss (2002, 2006), Waever (2002), Neumann (1995, 2004).

³¹ R. Jepperson, A. Wendt and P.J. Katzenstein, 'Norms, Identity, and Culture in National Security,' in P. Katzenstein (ed.), *The Culture of National Security – Norms and Identity in World Politics* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996), p.66.

³² Johnston (1995), pp. 32-64.

³³ Glenn *et al* (2004a), p.9.

that may be of interest.”³⁴ An examination of state political culture instead offers a wider dimension for cultural research into state behaviour (the political, rather than the solely the strategic) while effectively subsuming SC.³⁵ This broader approach is pursued by a number of theorists. In his collaborative work of 1996, Katzenstein begins with the assumption that “state interests do not exist to be ‘discovered’ by self-interested, rational actors. Interests are constructed through a process of social interaction.”³⁶ More importantly, he and his colleagues link security policy-making and the actors responsible for it to the wider social context in which they function; the book, accordingly, “stipulates a more social view of the environment in which states and other political actors operate. And it insists that political identities are to significant degrees constructed within that environment. It thus departs from materialist notions and the rationalist view of identities as exogenously given.”³⁷ A more inclusive approach is presented here to the notions of culture and identity, both of which are socially constructed and, therefore, context specific; furthermore, there is an acknowledgment that actors themselves are encultured within the social environment.

The upshot of their approach is that it allows the authors to account for the influence of culture over the state as a whole. In the same volume, Jepperson *et al* argue that “cultural environments affect not only the incentives for different kinds of state behaviour but also the basic character of states – what we call state ‘identity.’”³⁸ Equally, in his study of German and Japanese behaviour of de-emphasising military instruments as a means of securing national security objectives after the Second World War, Berger argues that military culture is rooted in constantly re-evaluated national identities. His argument is that Germany and Japan, “as a result of their historical experiences and the way in which those experiences were interpreted by domestic political actors, have developed beliefs and values that make them peculiarly reluctant

³⁴ J. Duffield, ‘Political Culture and State Behavior: Why Germany Confounds Neorealism’, *International Organization* 53:4 (Autumn 1999), p.776.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, p.777.

³⁶ P. Katzenstein (b), ‘Introduction: Alternative Perspectives on National Security,’ in P. Katzenstein (ed.), *The Culture of National Security – Norms and Identity in World Politics* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996), p.2.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, p.26.

³⁸ R. Jepperson *et al* (1996), p.33.

to resort to the use of military force.”³⁹ He implies that military culture is a subset of political culture, which is in turn informed by societal values and preferences; additionally, culture is not static, but amenable to change, as it is “under pressure from external developments and internal contradictions.”⁴⁰ Although change is most often incremental, traumatic events can trigger the need for sudden renegotiation of these identities as was the case of Germany and Japan after the Second World War. Overall, Berger’s account shows that military strategy, in particular favouring or rejecting the use of military instruments, can be affected by a general shift in the state’s culture, which “comprises beliefs about the way the world is – including at the most basic level beliefs that define the individual’s and the group’s identities – and ideas about the way the world ought to be.”⁴¹

However, more is revealed about the authors’ theoretical commitments in their conceptions of ‘culture’ and ‘identity.’ The former “denotes collective models of nation-state authority and identity,”⁴² whilst the latter is more modestly utilised as a shorthand label “for varying constructions of nation- and statehood,” that are “enacted domestically and projected internationally.”⁴³ If identity is treated as a ‘label,’ the question that remains to be answered is how it should be investigated. On this point, the authors make clear their “methodological conventionalism,”⁴⁴ and their lack of “commitment to ‘subjectivism’ in whatever sense.”⁴⁵ Their focus is not on accounting for the processes through which identities were constructed, but rather on “recount[ing] in historical fashion” the development of the “interpretative frames employed by actors.”⁴⁶ Therefore, it follows that, whereas interests are not exogenously given but are instead generated from ideational factors, understanding how and why these ideational factors have developed is not necessary to understanding their influence on behaviour. This echoes Wendt’s conception of

³⁹ T. Berger, ‘Norms, Identity and National Security in Germany and Japan,’ in P. Katzenstein (ed.), *The Culture of National Security – Norms and Identity in World Politics* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996), p.318.

⁴⁰ Ibid., p.326.

⁴¹ Ibid., p.325.

⁴² Katzenstein *et al* (1996b), p.6.

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ Jepperson *et al* (1996), p.67.

⁴⁵ Ibid., p.66.

⁴⁶ Ibid., p.67.

identity as stable and unitary. It should come as no surprise, then, that Wendt was himself one of the volume's contributors.

Having said that, this integrated view of culture continues to have traction in the field of SC. In their volume *Strategic Culture and Weapons of Mass Destruction* (2008), Johnson, Kartchner and Larsen define the concept as:

That set of shared beliefs, assumptions, and modes of behaviour, derived from common experiences and accepted narratives (both oral and written), that shape collective identity and relationships to other groups, and which determine appropriate ends and means for achieving security objectives.⁴⁷

The link between identities and the decision-making process is highlighted: in contrast to neorealist assumptions of states as essentially power-seekers, this version of SC “assumes that states form their interests, and their views of other actors, based on a normative understanding of who they are, and what role they should be playing.”⁴⁸ In other words, identity provides the lens through which states perceive their own place in the broader international setting, as well as the motivations of Others; this, in turn affects how states interact with these other actors.

Additionally, there is an acknowledgement that, as identities and cultures are socially constructed, changes to the social context may lead to their re-evaluation, and, consequently, to an alteration of state policies and behaviour: “If historical memory, political institutions, and multilateral commitments shape strategic culture, then, recent studies argue, it would seem logical to accept that security policies will evolve over time.”⁴⁹ This is in tune with Berger's findings on German and Japanese culture but also with Ermarth's study of the historical evolution of Russian strategic culture. He argues that Russia's political culture has played a significant role in shaping the

⁴⁷ J.L. Johnson, K.M. Kartchner and J.A. Larsen, 'Introduction,' in J.L. Johnson, K.M. Kartchner and J.A. Larsen (eds.), *Strategic Culture and Weapons of Mass Destruction – Culturally Based Insights into Comparative National Security Policymaking* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), p.9.

⁴⁸ J.L. Johnson, 'Conclusion: Toward a Standard Methodological Approach,' in J.L. Johnson, K.M. Kartchner and J.A. Larsen (eds.), *Strategic Culture and Weapons of Mass Destruction – Culturally Based Insights into Comparative National Security Policymaking* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), p.246.

⁴⁹ J.S. Lantis, 'Strategic Culture: From Clausewitz to Constructivism,' in J.L. Johnson, K.M. Kartchner and J.A. Larsen (eds.), *Strategic Culture and Weapons of Mass Destruction – Culturally Based Insights into Comparative National Security Policymaking* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), p.44.

strategic subset, in that it “is itself very ‘martial’ or harmonious with military values in that it is grounded on the principle of kto-kovo (literally ‘who–whom’), that is, who dominates over whom by virtue of coercive power or status imparted by higher authority.”⁵⁰ Unsurprisingly however, he has less to say about how this political culture has developed to fit neatly with a policy of heavy militarisation – or, indeed, explore the link between Russian identity and this political culture. Instead, Ermarth focuses on tracing the development of the role of the military as essential to Russian strategic culture in the Imperial and Soviet eras, to its decline at the end of the Cold War and into the Yeltsin period. What is interesting about his approach is the acknowledgment that a culture which prioritises military might is amenable to re-interpretation and may fall from favour in the opportune international and domestic setting, even in the case of a state which has so strong a tradition of it as Russia.

Weak constructivism, therefore, has not only accommodated a broadening of its field of research, but has also led to a questioning of SC’s traditional view of culture as a largely static feature of states. In 1995, Johnston was arguing that “the weight of historical experiences and historically-rooted strategic preferences tends to constrain responses to changes in the ‘objective’ strategic environment (...). If strategic culture changes, it does so slowly, lagging behind changes in ‘objective’ conditions.”⁵¹ In other words, culture is embedded in the consciousness of decision-makers and, as a result, is slow to react to the changing environment. However, constructivism not only allows, but in many ways dictates the challenging of this notion. If cultures and identities are socially constructed, then they are open to being perpetuated or reinterpreted in equal measure. The alteration of the domestic or international setting may trigger cultural dilemmas which “define new directions for foreign policy and demand the reconstruction of historical narratives.”⁵² This is evident in both Berger and Ermarth’s case studies on the change in perception over the utility of military force in securing security objectives in Germany, Japan and Russia. Overall, what this shift entails is not

⁵⁰ F.W. Ermarth, ‘Russian Strategic Culture in Flux: Back to the Future?’, in J.L. Johnson, K.M. Kartchner and J.A. Larsen (eds.), *Strategic Culture and Weapons of Mass Destruction – Culturally Based Insights into Comparative National Security Policymaking* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), p.87.

⁵¹ Johnston (1995), p.34. This view of traditional Strategic Culture studies is shared by Poore (1996), Lantis (2009) and Libel (2016).

⁵² Lantis (2009), p.45.

a recognition that change is necessary, but that it is possible. In a sense, this implies a higher degree of attention being awarded to the impact of agency over identities. Changes in the environment, and particularly shocks which may alter the “evolutionary pattern”⁵³ of states, are opportunities for identity-related tenets to be questioned and either buttressed or amended. How actors negotiate such developments is therefore crucial in understanding state behaviour. In this view, both continuity and change of identity-related precepts and the policies they generate are valid responses and recent SC case studies reflect this.

On the continuity side, and following on from Berger’s account, Dalgaard-Nielsen analyses Germany’s negative response to the Iraq invasion by tracing its roots back to two competing schools of thought which emerged after 1945, ‘never again alone’ and ‘never again war,’ which “represented competing interpretations of German history and diverging prescriptions regarding security and defence policy.”⁵⁴ Both these interpretations are based on the trauma incurred by the German people as a result of the Second World War but, whilst the former emphasises the need for democratisation and integration within the broader Western community, the latter focuses on demilitarisation and a rejection of the use of force beyond self-defence or humanitarian intervention.⁵⁵ Dalgaard-Nielsen explains Germany’s reaction to the allied invasion of Iraq as a continuation of the dialogue between these two traditions. A pre-emptive strike against Iraq in the absence of a UN resolution went against German precepts on military intervention, and as a result, Germany declined entering the coalition of the willing. At the same time Germany wanted to avoid international isolation in the matter by seeking to build an anti-war counter-coalition alongside France and Russia.⁵⁶ Both the motivations behind Germany’s negative response to the Iraq invasion and its subsequent position towards it are telling of its ingrained anxiety towards war and isolation. Dalgaard-Nielsen therefore challenges the neorealist assessment of the event, which would view the ‘no’ to Iraq as evidence of the

⁵³ Greathouse (2010), p.78.

⁵⁴ A. Dalgaard-Nielsen, ‘The Test of Strategic Culture: Germany, Pacifism and Pre-emptive Strikes,’ *Security Dialogue* 36:3 (2005), pp.339-359.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, p.344.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, pp.351-352.

emergence of “a more assertive and independent Germany,”⁵⁷ and traces it to a continuation of its post-war political and strategic culture.

On the other hand, in a comparative study between Australia and New-Zealand, David McCraw explores the issue of change/continuity by analysing the development of the two states’ strategic cultures. The author argues that a state’s strategic culture has its “roots in fundamental influences such as geopolitical setting, history and political culture.”⁵⁸ As such, he suggests that the different historical experiences and domestic environments of two similar actors can lead to distinct strategic positions. In Australia’s case, McCraw notices a continuity of its realist strategic culture, “which is permeated with a concern about the development of military threats to the country and the need for deterrent force and allies.”⁵⁹ In contrast, New Zealand’s geographical isolation and lack of historical experience of external attacks – which had caused the development of security-related anxieties in Australia – led to the development of an alternative idealist strategic culture, which “is anti-militarist and looks for ways to resolve disputes by negotiation and diplomacy.”⁶⁰ As a result, the neo-liberal alternative replaced the traditional Australian-inspired realist variant and is now New Zealand’s dominant strategic culture.⁶¹ Again, McCraw does not analyse the processes through which these political cultures developed or, indeed the broader link to Australian/New Zealander identities. However, his study of geo-politically similar actors does show that continuity or change of cultures is context contingent and that historical narratives, though enduring, are open to re-interpretation.

Finally, the broadening of the field of research of SC, as well as its venture into constructivism, might ultimately address a significant issue with this school – the lack of case studies of minor powers or small states. Strategic culturalists have traditionally shown great interest in analysing the unique cultures of great powers, such as the

⁵⁷ Ibid., p.340.

⁵⁸ D. McCraw, ‘Change and Continuity in Strategic Culture: the Cases of Australia and New Zealand,’ *Australian Journal of International Affairs* 65:2 (2011), p.167.

⁵⁹ Ibid., p.174.

⁶⁰ Ibid., p.176.

⁶¹ Ibid., p.182.

USA,⁶² Soviet Union/Russia,⁶³ Germany,⁶⁴ or China.⁶⁵ Less attention has been paid to smaller states whose capacity to influence the international world order is limited and more difficult to gauge. Arguably, a recognition has generally been lacking that minor powers may, at the very least, be reacting to changes within the international system in unique ways, if not actively shaping it, and that there is utility in studying their behaviour. There are those within SC, however, who have set to rectify this gap in the research. Rasmussen, for instance, argues that, by examining a minor state, in his case Denmark, one may uncover certain truths about the changing world order that would otherwise be hidden from us: “perhaps the affairs of minor powers better reflect the effects of changes in world order than those of major powers because while it is the major powers that bring about changes in world order, it is the minor powers that are affected by the changes.”⁶⁶

His study reveals that Denmark’s perceptions over the use of military force after the Cold War has been shaped by cultural factors, namely a dialogue between two discourses – ‘cosmopolitans’ and ‘defencists.’ He therefore rejects the structuralist explanation for Denmark’s increased military activism during the 1990s that “any state (...) has some inherent urge to project military power, i.e. an urge that might be quelled by outside pressure (...) but which would surely be revived when that pressure disappeared.”⁶⁷ Instead he offers an agent-oriented analysis of how cosmopolitans – who reject the use of armed forces but for defensive purposes – and defencists – who argue for a strong military capacity – found common ground over the utility of using military force in the post-Cold War environment. Rasmussen argues that the Danish strategic culture debate shifted “from whether force was useful at all to the purposes that force should be used for” and emphasised “‘activism,’ which signifies a willingness to use military force against what is perceived as the new threat to the globalised world.”⁶⁸ More importantly, he highlights the role of agents, by arguing that their

⁶² Mahnken (2009).

⁶³ Herman (1996), Ermarth (2009).

⁶⁴ Berger (1996), Daalgard-Nielsen (2005).

⁶⁵ Johnston (1996).

⁶⁶ M.V. Rasmussen, ‘What’s the Use of It? Danish Strategic Culture and the Utility of Armed Force,’ *Cooperation and Conflict: Journal of the Nordic International Studies Association* 40:1 (2005), pp.68.

⁶⁷ Ibid., p.69.

⁶⁸ Ibid., p.82.

discourse was both shaping and being shaped by a new policy or practice of activism. For Rasmussen, both discourse and practice constitute a culture; the end of the Cold War 'unsettled' the balance between Danish discourse and practice, and, Rasmussen argues, the consequence would either have been the emergence of a new culture, or the refashioning of the existing one in a manner in which "the relationships between discourses are redefined to fit a new practice."⁶⁹

By tracing the evolution of Danish strategic culture in this way, the author uncovers a continuity rooted in flexibility and a culture which, whilst developing, maintains its original values. Therefore, Rasmussen shows, on the one hand, that the behaviour of small states cannot be accurately understood simply by correlation to major powers, as minor actors are driven by domestic and cultural factors as much as they are impacted by external conditions. Secondly, he emphasises the role of agency in (re)shaping culture. In so doing, however, Rasmussen also presents a deeper conception of culture/identity, questioning traditional constructivist SC accounts' focus on describing *how* agents act, whilst ignoring *why* and *for what purpose* certain courses of action were pursued. Instead, the practice theory he puts forward draws on more critical strands of constructivism and poststructuralism, by including discourse as well as practice in the study.⁷⁰ His analysis therefore provides an analysis of agents' interaction with the discursive structure of strategic culture by examining how new possibilities for action "influence and are influenced by existing discourses on the country's place in the world."⁷¹ Overall, Rasmussen's emphasis on discourse and agents' ability to employ it in adjusting the strategic culture so as to fit and legitimate new practices shows a conception of identity which sets the author apart from the mainstream Wendt-inspired culturalists. Indeed, this approach brings Rasmussen's study closer to those increasingly adopted in identity-oriented FPA, such as Browning and Doty.

Overall, the school of SC has developed significantly in both nature and scope of research over recent years and this thesis incorporates many of these elements. It

⁶⁹ Ibid., p.72.

⁷⁰ Rasmussen (2005), p.71.

⁷¹ Ibid.

shares the view that culture/identity is socially constructed, and explores its influence in guiding the behaviour of states, in terms of effectively setting priorities and red-lines. The broadening of the field from military strategy to foreign policy is necessary, because, as Duffield argued, this allows the researcher to study the impact of culture/identity over a variety of actions which go beyond solely the use of force. Secondly, the thesis acknowledges that re-evaluations of cultures/identities are not only possible, but a condition for their survival. Thirdly, it adds to the incidence of studies of minor powers by focusing on Romania, a state which in traditional accounts has limited freedom in setting its own foreign policy agenda. What is also clear, on the other hand, is that SC is largely dominated by Wendt-inspired weak constructivism and adopts a conception of identity in which the latter is rendered, as David Campbell has noted, as something essentialised,⁷² in effect a variable that can be studied by recourse to a conventional methodology.⁷³ In consequence, the focus is most often exclusively on how a culture influences behaviour – i.e. on the effects – rather than also on the social processes which have led to its development. Although there exists an acknowledgment of the role of agents in shaping cultures and identities, rather than solely being influenced by them, this link is rarely explored. As such, the inroads made by authors such as Rasmussen, who interrogate the role of agents in the development of identities through both discourse and practice are especially significant. The thesis will therefore aim to address the limitations of this weak constructivist perspective by arguing that the structures of meaning which articulate into a sense of identity may indeed become sedimented, offering them particular stability and resilience to change. However, by their very nature, these structures are constituted and socialised by agents through discourse. As such, treating identities simply as variables eschews the processes through which the answers to the questions ‘who we are,’ ‘who our others are,’ etc. were developed and came to be accepted as true at one point, and/or rejected at another. In contrast to this constricting approach, the thesis’ adopts a deeper conception of identity, one which examines how agents are shaped by, but also themselves shape, identities through social processes. In this view, the sedimented nature and stability of particular structures of meaning cannot

⁷² Campbell (1998), p.218.

⁷³ Jepperson *et al* (1996), p.67.

be taken as a given; instead it can only be accounted for by exploring agents' interaction with these structures.

Foreign Policy Analysis (FPA)

In its approach, the thesis draws on a deeper conception of identity which is increasingly noticeable within the school of FPA. Contrasting SC's traditionally narrow field of research and preferred structuralism, FPA, as the "study of conduct and practice of relations between different actors, primarily states, in the international system,"⁷⁴ is naturally broader in scope and primarily agent-oriented. Due to its interest in the decision-making process and its various sources of influence, this school fits the agenda of this thesis, in particular its more critical constructivist/postructuralist strands. It has been argued that constructivism and at least some FPA accounts are natural bedfellows⁷⁵ and, according to Houghton, there has existed "a focus on subjectivity, the construction of meaning and ideational factors – as opposed to supposedly 'objective' structures – [which] was evident in the study of foreign policy decision making from the start."⁷⁶ One of the early seminal works on FPA, Richard Snyder (not to be confused with SC's Jack Snyder), Bruck and Sapin's *Foreign Policy Decision-Making* (1963) highlights the interplay between actors and the environment in which they function:

It is difficult to see how we can account for specific actions and for continuities of policies without trying to discover how their operating environment is perceived by those responsible of choices, (...) what matters are selected for attention, and how their past experience conditions present responses.⁷⁷

More importantly, they argue that culture is a feature shared by all members of a community, including decision-makers and, as such, has a bearing on state action: "the decision-maker enters the government from the larger social system in which he also

⁷⁴ C. Alden and A. Aran, *Foreign Policy Analysis* (London: Routledge, 2013), p.1.

⁷⁵ D.P. Houghton, 'Reinvigorating the Study of Foreign Policy Decision Making: Toward a Constructivist Approach,' *Foreign Policy Analysis* 3 (2007), p.27.

⁷⁶ Ibid., p.31.

⁷⁷ R.C. Snyder, H.W. Bruck and B. Sapin, *Foreign Policy Decision-Making – An Approach to the Study of International Politics* 2nd Edition (New York: The Free Press of Glencoe, 1963), p.5.

retains membership. He comes to decision-making as a 'culture bearer.' Any conceptual scheme for analysing state behaviour must attempt to account for the impact of cultural patterns on decisions."⁷⁸ From its very inception, therefore, FPA was concerned with both actors' subjectivity and the manner in which their identities influence the decision-making process. However, as Houghton points out, "this dimension to FPA lay largely dormant until the 1990s."⁷⁹ Constructivist perspectives, indeed, were somewhat side-lined, as "the dominant approaches to FPA share[d] an acceptance of *rationalism* and a *materialist* ontology," which were "particularly clear in (Neo)Realist accounts of the international system."⁸⁰

Having said that, much like in the case of SC, the end of the Cold War saw a resurgence in interest for the study of the inter-subjective nature of reality and, consequently the influence of ideational factors on behaviour. Hill argues that increasingly relevant to FPA is the constructivist inspired notion that "identity is central to our understanding of foreign policy, and (often) vice versa" and that "its use extend[s] FPA's standard concern with the domestic sources of foreign policy to the areas of culture, including nationalism, tradition, memory and self-understanding."⁸¹ For him, the increased focus on identity is linked to a turn towards constructivism that "represents an epistemological challenge in the sense of the renewed criticism of positivism that it implies (...). It suggests that foreign policy can both arise from a constructed national identity and be constitutive of that identity."⁸² There is an acknowledgment in this that, far from being exogenously given, identity both shapes and is shaped by the discourse and practice of agents. As such, changes in identities and values, as well as the foreign policy they influence becomes not only a possibility, but often, a necessity. Alden and Aran, for instance, observe that "norms are contingent and reinterpreted by state and non-state actors over time. Foreign policy decision making is a process that evolves and responds to changing conditions within the halls of policy and the wider

⁷⁸ Ibid., p.156.

⁷⁹ Houghton (2007), p.32.

⁸⁰ C. Browning, *Constructivism, Narrative and Foreign Policy Analysis – a Case Study of Finland* (Bern: Peter Lang, 2008), pp.19-20.

⁸¹ C. Hill, 'Foreign Policy Analysis,' in B. Badie, D. Berg-Schlosser and L. Morlino (eds.), *International Encyclopedia of Political Science* (London: Sage, 2011), p.921.

⁸² Ibid., p.922.

society. FPA should recognize as formative these conditions of change (...).⁸³ They argue that constructivism “provides a coherent set of insights and analyses of practice which cohere well with core interests of FPA scholarship.”⁸⁴ Constructivism offers, therefore, a way of revealing the interplay between actors and their identities, how they are utilised, refashioned or reinforced to legitimate responses in the domestic or international environment.

This turn in FPA matches the similar development within SC. In contrast to the weak constructivism which dominates culturalists, however, in FPA one notices a move towards a more holistic, deeper conception of identity. Firstly, there exists increased interest into the process of development of identities and answering questions related to why certain identities have evolved in particular ways. In this, the role of history or rather, the telling of history, becomes key. As Breuning points out, historical experience is paramount in the shaping of cultures and identities: “culture denotes the set of values that is transmitted through the teaching of national history. At the heart of a culture are generalized beliefs and attitudes about one’s own state, about other states, and about the actual and desirable relationships between these.”⁸⁵ As a result, studying a culture or identity entails understanding how memories of the past influence present concerns and how they “shape the sensibilities of leaders, in terms of both their own reflexive reactions and their perceptions of what their domestic public will accept.”⁸⁶ History, or better yet, how history is interpreted, matters in the construction of identities, which, in turn, matter in the construction of foreign policy as well as the manner in which foreign policy choices are relayed or legitimated to the wider public.

Banerjee picks up on this and Snyder *et al*’s notion of decision-makers as culture bearers in his study of the behaviour of the two superpowers during the Cold War. His argument is that “culture makes states not only unitary decision-makers but integrated psychocultural subjects with state-level identities, emotions, causal beliefs, and

⁸³ Alden and Aran (2013), p.115.

⁸⁴ Ibid., p.116.

⁸⁵ M. Breuning, *Foreign Policy Analysis – a Comparative Introduction* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), p.128.

⁸⁶ Ibid., pp.128-129

motives.”⁸⁷ Actors are seen not as “individual psychological subjects but as carriers and coauthors (sic) of cultures and discourses that gain a coherent existence outside any one person.”⁸⁸ Specifically, Banerjee argues that culture guides the actions of actors by providing them with behavioural scripts or historical structures. Agents learn from the past, constructing patterns of response to specific circumstances which are repeated in future similar situations: “historical structures are viewed (...) as self-perpetuating systems of beliefs, motives, and actions of interacting groups. They are repetitive patterns of collective action that reinforce and are animated by enduring patterns of cultural belief.”⁸⁹ These cultural beliefs are rooted in descriptions of the Self and Others in certain historical contexts, implying that the Self-Other contrasts become entrenched and certain circumstances trigger particular types of behaviour: “a group of state leaders who share a culture will respond to events deemed by that culture to implicate their state with common perceptions, causal attributions, emotions, and motives.”⁹⁰ Overall, Banerjee sees agency and structure as mutually constituted, with cultures providing actors a blueprint for action, which actors then reinforce through their behaviour. Continuity of cultural patterns of behaviour is therefore a hallmark of Banerjee’s model and it implies, to a degree, that culture limits the avenues for action to the prescribed script.

However, perhaps the most radical move in the conceptualisation of identity within FPA and IR more broadly is offered by critical constructivists and poststructuralists. In contrast to weak constructivists who, as we have seen, make certain concessions to rationalist-materialist approaches, these authors take the issue of the construction of social reality most seriously, questioning the notion of the existence of a material world, at least insofar as objective, unmediated knowledge of this reality is possible. Whereas some of the theorists referred to in this section may identify themselves as poststructuralists or constructivists, what brings their theories together are a number

⁸⁷ S. Banerjee, ‘Reproduction of Subjects in Historical Studies: Attribution, Identity and Emotion on the Early Cold War,’ *International Studies Quarterly* 35:1 (1991), pp.19-20.

⁸⁸ Ibid., p.20.

⁸⁹ Ibid., p.23.

⁹⁰ Ibid., p.20.

of fundamental assumptions on how to approach the study of identity and a focus on the manner in which they are constituted and altered by agents.

Firstly, there exists a recognition that who the Self is is not something that can be taken for granted or essentialised. Because the image of the Self is produced internally through social processes any theory treating identity as a unitary, stable and easily intelligible from the outside eschews the complexity involved in the construction of the Self. As Zehfuss points out in her criticism of Wendt, the notion of a pre-given corporate identity does not take into account the various debates about who the Self should be,⁹¹ which take place domestically, a dimension bracketed in his inquiry. Zehfuss draws attention to the fact that, in her case study of German identity, “a number of different representations (...) were articulated within the FRG. Hence the question of what identity is to be attached to the notion of ‘German’ or ‘Germany’ was a contested issue not only between the FRG and its significant others.”⁹² Therefore, the processes through which answers to the question ‘who we are?’ are produced, reproduced or contested are key in understanding state identities. These do not simply exist, but are instead “emergent as part of an ongoing performance reaffirming subjectivity and identity.”⁹³ Actors construct stories about who they are, in the process of which they necessarily create a particular representation of the realm within which they function, and the others they come in contact with. At the same time, these stories, or narratives, create interests and have the power to legitimate certain courses of action, whilst making others impossible.⁹⁴ Identity and foreign policy, therefore, are inextricably linked, as foreign policy reflects a particular representation of the Self and its interests. On the other hand, with identity understood as performance, foreign policy becomes a means of (re)constituting the Self as a subject.⁹⁵

In this conception of identity, moreover, discourse or language is central to the constitution of the Self. As Browning notes, “if we accept the constructivist view of

⁹¹ Zehfuss (2006), p.107.

⁹² Ibid.

⁹³ Browning (2008), p.45.

⁹⁴ R.L. Doty, ‘Foreign Policy as Social Construction: A Post-Positivist Analysis of Us Counterinsurgency Policy in the Philippines,’ *International Studies Quarterly* 37 (1993).

⁹⁵ Browning (2008), p.45. Author’s own emphasis.

language, then it follows that a description can never simply claim to be *discovering* the essence of social reality, but is also engaged in *creating* and *constituting* it.”⁹⁶ A specific telling of identity, then, has significant constitutive power, because by presenting a story as facts – ‘this is who we are,’ ‘these are our others’ – it effectively makes them real. Campbell, for instance, argues that “identity functions within discourse, but in so doing, it transgresses and erases the discursive/extradiscursive distinction.”⁹⁷ In other words, it is only through discourse that we may comprehend and bring non-linguistic phenomena into being.⁹⁸ By drawing on Derrida, Zehfuss makes a similar point on the constitutive power of identity narratives that, contrary to mainstream accounts, the distinction between reality and its representations is not clear cut,⁹⁹ because we all already function within this reality and cannot make sense of it except through our interpretations.¹⁰⁰ As a result, she continues, “if the ‘real’ is not natural, if we cannot ever go back to a definitive origin, then any claim to an origin will need to be questioned. Narratives of identity start somewhere. They claim possession of an origin.”¹⁰¹ An identity narrative, therefore, builds context. It provides, importantly, an ordering and interpretation of the past which legitimates a particular representation of the Self. As Campbell notes, the narrativising of history mediates between past and present by conferring onto historical events and relationships with others meanings which make the present world intelligible to us.¹⁰² As Browning further argues, through these stories about the past it becomes possible to “understand the situations we face today and to tell ourselves what kind of person we were, are and will be.”¹⁰³ The telling of history, therefore, becomes critical as the main vehicle through which a particular representation of the Self is constructed and socialised. Consequently, an identity narrative creates not only the current social reality, but entails also a (re)constitution of the past and, in this conception, identity

⁹⁶ Ibid., p.42.

⁹⁷ D. Campbell (a), *National Deconstruction – Violence, Identity, and Justice in Bosnia* (Minneapolis: University of Minneapolis Press, 1998), p.25.

⁹⁸ Ibid.

⁹⁹ M. Zehfuss, *Constructivism in International Relations* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), p.246.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., p.256.

¹⁰¹ Ibid., p.246.

¹⁰² Campbell (a) (1998), p.34.

¹⁰³ Browning (2008), p.47.

construction is revealed as a much more complex process than mainstream or weak constructivist accounts would allow. It is this link to the telling of history, that 'who we were' has significant bearing on 'who we are,' which gives the identity narrative its depth. Without it, as a result, identity remains epiphenomenal and, to a certain extent, hollow.

A final point on this conception of identity refers to the significance of the process of differentiation entailed in the construction of Self. As Browning argues, "fundamental to narrative is an explicit concern with achieving a self-constitution through differentiating the self from others."¹⁰⁴ In other words, the creation of the Self is achieved in relation to Others, which provides both the boundaries of the Self – who is in and who is out – and, importantly, its characteristics – 'how we are' as well as 'how we are not.' Because of this, as Campbell notes, the concepts of identity and difference are mutually constituted.¹⁰⁵ The Other, therefore, becomes an essential element of the Self, as any effort at establishing individuality and identity entails framing the actor vis-à-vis Others. In this view, delineation from Others is an "active and ongoing part of identity formation."¹⁰⁶ Having said that, as Waever and Hansen point out, the Self/Other nexus is not always necessarily antagonistic. They argue that "difference only collapses into opposition in special situations" and that, "in addition to Others (cast as radically different and potentially threatening enemies) there are, for instance, friends and relatives."¹⁰⁷ The focus of identity studies, as Neumann argued, should therefore be on "how these boundaries," or lack thereof, "come into existence and are maintained."¹⁰⁸

Within FPA, a seminal work emphasizing the constitutive power of discourse in the process of othering is that of Roxanne Doty and her study of the US' counterinsurgency policy towards the Philippines. She criticises traditional FPA accounts of state

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., p.49.

¹⁰⁵ D. Campbell (b), *Writing Security – United States Foreign Policy and the Politics of Identity Revised Edition* (Manchester: Eire and Europe, 1998 revised edition, original 1992), p.9.

¹⁰⁶ Neumann (1995), p.28.

¹⁰⁷ Waever, O., 'Identities, Communities and Foreign Policy: Discourse Analysis as Foreign Policy Theory,' in L. Hansen and O. Waever (eds.), *European Integration and National Identity – The Challenge of the Nordic States* (London: Routledge, 2002), p.24.

¹⁰⁸ Neumann (1995), p.28.

behaviour, noting that they are predominantly “concerned with explaining why particular decisions resulting in specific courses of action were made;”¹⁰⁹ in other words, they focus on answering *why* questions, or to prove that a specific action was predictable in a given situation.¹¹⁰ However, in her view, this type of analyses preclude a discussion of why and which certain types of behaviour could be undertaken. Doty’s study explores *how-possible* questions, by examining “how meanings are produced and attached to various social subjects/objects, thus constituting particular interpretive dispositions which create certain possibilities and preclude others.”¹¹¹ Consequently, “what is explained is not why a particular outcome obtained, but rather how the subjects, objects, and interpretive dispositions were socially constructed such that certain practices were made possible.”¹¹² One notices here significant similarities between this study and Rasmussen’s work, as it too focuses on the constructive power of discourse, which may be used to legitimate certain practices – in this case, Doty shows how the US constructed an image of the Philippines that justified an intervention which would otherwise have been impossible if the state were viewed as a sovereign equal. For Doty, the emphasis is on the “linguistic construction of reality,”¹¹³ which means that the portrayal of the Self and Others in particular situations is fluid and open to reinterpretation. This study therefore emphasises the constructed nature of subjective realities and agents’ role in shaping them. As, Christopher Browning has argued, “‘how’ questions problematize the very bases of ‘why’ questions by analysing the socially constructed beliefs, symbols and myths which underlie dominant claims to rationality.”¹¹⁴ Furthermore, because it is in the power of agents to alter these realities, constructivist FPA studies must acknowledge that the systems of meaning attached to the Self and Others which undergird policies can always be changed, consequently leading to an alteration of the policies themselves.

Drawing on this insight, Cos and Bilgin examine Turkey’s construction of the Soviet Other, namely the fact that the portrayal of the Soviet Union shifted from friend to foe

¹⁰⁹ Doty (1993), p.298.

¹¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹¹ Ibid.

¹¹² Ibid.

¹¹³ Ibid., p.302.

¹¹⁴ Browning (2008), p.22.

after the Second World War.¹¹⁵ They build on Doty's *how-possible* approach to show how, through various portrayals of the Self and Other, identities and interests linked to them are constructed.¹¹⁶ The importance of discourse in this process is also highlighted: "dominant discourses, through representations of the 'self' and the 'other,' construct a 'common sense' that predefines what is 'intelligible' and 'rational' course of action and what is not."¹¹⁷ As a result, discourse acts as an "enabler/limiter"¹¹⁸ of foreign policy choice. Cos and Bilgin use this framework to explore Turkey's othering of Tsarist/Soviet Russia, the image of which developed, in a few decades, from 'Tsarist Russia, the rival,' to 'Soviet Russia, the sincere friend,' and, finally, to 'Soviet Russia, the expansionist threat' after 1945.¹¹⁹ By portraying Soviet Russia as an existential threat, Turkey's pro-Western, and particularly, pro-American foreign policy direction was thereby legitimated. The authors show how the identity of an Other may be recast in the context of changing circumstances and, in so doing, they reveal the connection between representations of the Self/Other and national identities and interests: an alteration of the image of an Other is, at the same time, a consequence of a change in national identity and interests, and a reinforcement of them.

Finally, whilst Cos and Bilgin are concerned primarily with the construction of Others' identities, Browning provides a comprehensive study of how critical constructivism and Doty's *how-possible* approach may be employed in the examination of portrayals of the Self and their impact on foreign policy. Placing the social processes through which subjectivity is constituted at the heart of his analysis, Browning puts forward a narrative theory of identity, "which seeks to show how action becomes meaningful in the process of narrating constitutive stories of the self."¹²⁰ He argues that "identities (and the interests that flow from them) are not ahistorical and fixed, but are unstable and in constant need of re-affirmation and re-construction in view of unfolding events

¹¹⁵ K. Cos and P. Bilgin, 'Stalin's Demands: Construction of the 'Soviet Other' in Turkey's Foreign Policy, 1919-1945,' *Foreign Policy Analysis* 6 (2010), pp.43-60.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p.46.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 57-58.

¹²⁰ Browning (2008), p.45.

and developing relationships.”¹²¹ Browning highlights the continuous dialogue between agents and the structure of identity narratives, emphasising that it is through stories about who we are that we are able to attach meaning to the social world and make sense of our place on the international stage. In this view, the Self/Other nexus becomes key to the constitution of the Self: “in [the] process of storytelling, the storytelling subject positions various events, incidents and actors (including itself) in a framework of negative and positive relationships.”¹²² Drawing on critical constructivist and poststructuralist approach to identity construction, the author explores the processes of constituting the Self in relation to Others through narratives, and how, in his case study of Finland, “particular concepts and identity markers have emerged” but also “how their interpretation and meaning has changed and developed as Finns have sought to position themselves in the world through time.”¹²³ In his approach, identity is fluid, malleable, and multiple narratives can exist at any one time, each with its own degree of salience and traction.

Similarly to this project, Browning identifies recurring themes of Finnish identity which have, either on their own or in various combinations, shaped the dominant identity narrative at different points in time, such as “Nordicity, Europeanness, the Baltic, Russia, neutrality, sovereignty, unity, size and pragmatism, as well as how Finland has been variously positioned along the East-West continuum.”¹²⁴ On the other hand, whilst emphasising the necessity that identity narratives are challenged and reinterpreted over time, with multiple themes being in play at any given moment, “it is also the case that across different periods a certain amount of sedimentation of particular narrative structures becomes evident.”¹²⁵ In this, Browning acknowledges that certain identity themes may become entrenched making them increasingly resilient to agents’ attempts at their marginalization. Therefore, continuity, as well as change, is possible.

¹²¹ Browning (2008), p.11.

¹²² Ibid., p.46.

¹²³ Ibid., p.14.

¹²⁴ Ibid.

¹²⁵ Ibid., pp.14-15.

On the other hand, Browning also argues that, for a certain narrative of identity to fulfil its function, it must be socialised so as to “create across a group of people a feeling of a shared national experience and common identity.”¹²⁶ In this the construction of a historical narrative is crucial. In a sense, this position picks up on Breuning’s connection between identity and history, but reverses the causal relationship: “present concerns and conflicts tend to receive an historical projection, as present representations of the self and of others and the relationships entailed, are given historical validity through selective narratives that imply that it has always been so.”¹²⁷ The role of historical narratives is therefore either to buttress a certain conception of identity or to reconstitute it to fit contemporaneous interests and altering Self-Other relations. This perspective contrasts Breuning and Banerjee’s position that historical structures are enduring and limit or shape agents’ identities and actions; in his narrative theory of identity the agent-structure relationship is decidedly tilted in the agency’s favour.

Finally, Browning’s study has an additional significance in the context of this thesis, namely that his account similarly focuses on the identity politics of a minor state. In a separate article the author challenges mainstream FPA’s focus on major powers and the reality that “small states are frequently ignored, the view being that ultimately they have to go along with the frames dictated by larger, more powerful states.”¹²⁸ Similarly to Rasmussen, Browning rejects neorealist assumptions that small states have little freedom in pursuing an identity-driven foreign policy agenda because the pressures of the international system are too strong for domestic factors to bear any meaningful influence.¹²⁹ Instead, Browning argues that what offers or limits small states’ opportunities for manoeuvre is the manner in which ‘smallness’ is fed into the identity narrative: if it is portrayed as a weakness or as restricting the state’s capacity for action, “then this will affect how state interests and possibilities for action are conceived. In contrast, more positive renderings of smallness in constructing state

¹²⁶ Ibid., p.52.

¹²⁷ Ibid., p.54.

¹²⁸ C. Browning, ‘Small, Smart and Salient? Rethinking Identity in Small States Literature,’ *Cambridge Review of International Affairs* 19:4 (2006), p.669.

¹²⁹ Ibid., p.671.

identities will entail broader possibilities for foreign policies.”¹³⁰ As a result, studying small states is a worthwhile exercise because these actors possess the capacity to cast their ‘smallness’ in ways which are relevant to their foreign policy behaviour. Browning’s case study, therefore, has a similar scope to the present thesis and, although there are some differences in their approaches, his work remains an important reference point for it.

Overall, FPA, much like SC, has developed in a direction which suits the purposes of this project. The acknowledgment of identity as a domestic factor which influences the foreign policy decision-making process has been facilitated by the adoption of constructivist approaches. Moreover, in its critical constructivist/poststructuralist strands, we have seen a move towards some radical claims about the nature of identities and the role of social processes in their constitution and development. This project picks up many of the assumptions and types of argument made by these theories. Firstly, the mutually constitutive nature of agents as ‘culture bearers’ and identities is critical to this thesis. On this point, FPA, with its agent-oriented agenda, offers a contrasting perspective to that of the structure-focused SC. However, even within FPA, as has been shown, there are different positions on where the balance lies within this relationship, from Breuning and Banerjee’s arguments that historical structures have an enduring quality which limits or shapes agents’ courses of action, to identity-as-performance theories in which “the self is always free to narrate differently, to change the story.”¹³¹ On the agent-structure debate, as will be discussed presently, the thesis will position itself in the middle ground by arguing that, whilst as social constructs structures of meaning may always be altered, the more sedimented and entrenched they are the more difficult these structures become to displace. Having said that, the premises of this project owe much to critical constructivist and poststructuralist work on identity. One of these is acknowledging the importance of discourse in the process of constituting the Self. It is through stories, or narratives on ‘who we are’ that agents are able to generate a sense of collective identity, understand the environment in which they function and attach meaning to certain

¹³⁰ Ibid., p.674.

¹³¹ Browning (2008), p.58.

courses of action. Moreover, the project argues that narratives not only create a current subjective reality but also constitute the past in a manner which legitimises a particular representation of the Self. Historical narratives therefore become a vehicle for the socialisation and sedimentation of specific identity narratives and the interests which are derived from them. Furthermore, the thesis draws on the notion that in the process of establishing 'who we are,' agents are also inherently outlining 'who we are not.' As such, the process of differentiation from Others is vital to the constitution of the Self – identity narratives create, by their very nature, threatening or friendly Others, but also, as will be shown in the case of Romania, Estranged Selves. Finally, adding to the incidence of studies on the foreign policy of small states, this project takes a similar view to Browning on the utility of expanding the agenda in this direction and taking advantage of the explanatory capacity of constructivist approaches, in contrast to the limited ability of rationalist-materialist avenues to account for the foreign policy differences between minor powers.

[Limitations of SC and FPA and the Contribution of this Thesis to the Field](#)

There is, therefore, an overlap between SC and FPA and it is within this field that the present project fits. Both SC and FPA feature constructivist approaches to the study of state action. Furthermore, constructivism has allowed two schools which traditionally adopt different stances on the agency-structure debate to meet in the middle, at least to a certain extent; for SC, this has meant more attention being paid to actors' capacity to alter their strategic culture in the changing environment, whilst for FPA it has involved accounting for the possibility that it is not only that agents shape the structure, but that historical narratives and identities also shape actors. This overlap has occurred because SC, which has culture/identity at its heart throughout, has expanded its research from the rather narrow interest in the culture of the use of force, into the broader field of political and national culture. For FPA, on the other hand, the crucial shift was in including identity in the range of domestic factors which have an impact on foreign policy. Finally, both fields have expanded their research into the study of small states, going against the traditional focus on the behaviour of major powers. However, there exist also some important differences between these two

traditions, especially in terms of their approach to the study of identity and, generally, the relationship between agency and structure. The aim of this thesis is to find a middle path which brings these approaches together and, in so doing, provide a framework for researching the influence of identity on the behaviour of states which is sensitive to all the complexities involved in the development of identities.

SC and the Study of Identity

For the purposes of this project, the most important limitation of SC is to be found in the manner in which identity is conceptualized and studied. As has already been outlined, by drawing on weak constructivist claims about the nature of social reality, SC tends to treat identities in an essentialist manner, as variables which serve to explain particular patterns of behaviour. There exists, one would argue, a largely exclusive focus on describing the content of cultures, whilst the social processes through which they are constituted in the first place are not investigated. In his study of Germany and Japan, for instance, Berger does not engage with the process of how the post-war identities developed but limits himself to exploring how they impacted on the two states' strategic culture.¹³² This fact is picked up by Katzenstein in the conclusion to the volume: "the empirical essays have little to say about the manner by which collective identities and norms are constructed through different generative processes: ecological, social and internal."¹³³ The same could be said of Ermarth's study of Russian strategic culture or Dalgaard-Nielsen's account of Germany – neither examine the deeper cultural meanings attached to the positions outlined, or the processes which have led to their development.¹³⁴ Overall, most SC studies tend to be concerned solely with the impact of identity on behaviour, whilst its sources and evolution are predominantly bracketed; incidentally, this mirrors Doty's criticism of mainstream FPA. The focus tends to be on *why* rather than *how* questions, which is

¹³² Berger (1996), pp.317-356.

¹³³ J. Katzenstein (a), 'Conclusion,' in P. Katzenstein (ed.), *The Culture of National Security – Norms and Identity in World Politics* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996), p.513.

¹³⁴ Ermarth (2009), Dalgaard-Nielsen (2005).

more problematic for SC than it is for FPA, precisely because culture/identity is its core concern.

Picking up on a criticism levied by Zehfuss against Wendt which can be applied to strategic culturalists also, “the exclusion of (...) domestic processes of articulation of state identity are part of the problem.”¹³⁵ The issue with this approach to the study of identity is that, by not examining how or why a specific actor has come to develop a specific identity, the subjective rationale for action the identity generates remains underdetermined. What we are left with is a schematic representation of state identities and interests which may explain certain behaviours, but not all. As Waever and Hansen point out, the theory “is unable to explain in a systematic way – beyond historical narrative – why the same cultural and historical background can sustain highly contradictory foreign policies, or to explain change, especially discontinuous change.”¹³⁶ Whilst acknowledging that changes in both identity and, consequently, policy are possible, SC’s weak constructivism does not provide an adequate framework for its investigation. In other words, to understand the full spectrum of behaviours which may be rendered as legitimate or illegitimate, necessary or impossible at a specific moment in time, a different approach to the study of identity is needed. Most importantly, this approach must interrogate seriously the role of agency in identity construction, an issue on which SC rarely touches upon.

An avenue for addressing this limitation is offered by critical constructivists and poststructuralists who place social processes at the very core of their analysis. Understanding identities as being articulated through discourse highlights the importance of narratives to identity constitution. What is key is that describing identities is insufficient to grasping their influence on behaviour because identities are not generated out of thin air. They are subjective constructs which provide answers to critical questions regarding the nature of the Self and the manner in which it relates to the outside world, which is itself created in the process of constituting the Self. Therefore, examining how events, both past and present are perceived by agents and

¹³⁵ Zehfuss (2006), p.111.

¹³⁶ Waever (2002), p.22.

how stories about the Self are reinforced or challenged at a particular moment in time is vital to explaining a change or continuity in behaviour. Moreover, because multiple answers to the same questions of 'who we are' or 'what this event means' are possible, the stability and unitary character of identities needs to be proven and not taken for granted, as is the case with the vast majority of SC studies. Consequently, the project will draw on the insights provided by critical constructivists and poststructuralists to show not only how stories about Romanian identity influence the state's behaviour, but also how the features of the identity narrative which shape foreign policy priorities have emerged and acquired great staying power. The project will identify the recurring themes of Romanian identity – similarly to Browning's exercise – and place them in historical context, tracing how the narrative surrounding them has been adapted or reinforced at key moments in the state's evolution. The benefit of this historical perspective is that it captures the mutually constitutive nature of stories of national identity and history; on the one hand, the portrayal of the Self and Others is reflected in the narrative of Romania's history; meanwhile, the historical narrative acts as an instrument for the socialisation of these portrayals. This approach offers an avenue into understanding the continuity or change of national identity narratives and, consequently, behaviour, by linking it to the dialogue between the agents – Romanians – and the structure – the identity narrative – through the telling of national history.

The Agent-Structure Debate

Drawing on the point above, the next necessary step is outlining the thesis' position on the question of the relationship between agency and structure. As has been previously examined, SC and FPA traditionally take contrasting views on the matter, with the former predominantly structuralist and the latter agent-oriented. Although constructivism has, to a certain extent, bridged this gap, differences in approach remain. As we have seen, SC tends to favour structure over agency. This is evident, for instance, in the work of Katzenstein *et al*, who "are interested in how structures of constructed meaning, embodied in norms or identities, affect what states do."¹³⁷ There is an obvious connection in this position to SC's weak constructivism and their

¹³⁷ Jepperson *et al* (1996), p.66.

lack of concern with the processes involved in (re)constituting identities rooted in a predilection towards posing *why* rather than *how* questions. An important exception to this trend is represented by Rasmussen's study of Danish discourse on military strategy but, as has been noted, he is heavily influenced by critical constructivist/poststructuralist work on identity. His approach matches that of FPA authors such as Doty, Cos and Bilgin and Browning who similarly focus on agents' discursive construction of the Self and Others. However, outside of critical constructivist/poststructuralist studies, within FPA there also exists movement on this debate, with authors such as Banerjee or Snyder *et al*, for instance, allowing for a greater degree of impact of cultural structures over the agent.

As for this project, taking into account the critical assumptions regarding the importance of social processes in the generation of identity narratives, it follows that SC's thoroughgoing structuralism must be rejected. The thesis understands a particular representation of the Self as being articulated through narrative and, in so doing, acknowledges that agents can and do interact with the structure in meaningful ways. In an ever changing international and domestic environments, the nature and precepts of stories of national identity are under constant scrutiny and pressure. When the context changes, when a perception emerges that a threat has emerged or disappeared, the re-evaluation of certain identity tenets may be necessary. In this sense, the project agrees with Browning's assertion that certain narratives of identity may gain salience and become entrenched or be marginalised over time,¹³⁸ and in this the role of agents is paramount. The two particular such instances this thesis will focus on are the interaction of Nicolae Ceausescu and Ion Iliescu with the Romanian identity narrative during the communist period and its aftermath. However, the freedom awarded to agents in altering identity narratives or coming up with new ones noticeable in much of critical constructivist/poststructuralist work is slightly problematic. For instance, in Doty's examination of the US counterinsurgency of the Philippines, she examines how "the subjects, objects, and interpretive dispositions were socially constructed"¹³⁹ in such a way that an intervention which would have been illegitimate

¹³⁸ Browning (2008), p.16.

¹³⁹ Doty (1993), p.298.

if the Philippines were represented as a sovereign equal was made possible. In this case, the agent, the US, had complete freedom to constitute the subject of Philippines, an Other, into an entity against whom action was justified. For Browning, too, identity as performance means that “the constitution of the self is always in process, and always open to change and development.”¹⁴⁰ In this view, “multiple narratives of identity are always in play, each with varying constitutive effects and power.”¹⁴¹ Again, agents play a critical role in determining which representation of the Self becomes dominant and how and when it is challenged by developing and bringing into play alternative narratives.

One questions, however, whether these positions accurately reflect the balance between agency and structure. Moreover, if agents have an unhindered ability to alter the structures of identity narratives, then there is no possible way in which the latter may influence the former in terms of behaviour, which would render this project purposeless. Instead, this thesis proposes that structures of identity narratives may acquire a certain degree of resilience and, in so doing, limit agents’ ability to modify them, especially in drastic ways. At the same time as being resilient to change, these structures will have an impact on the behaviour of actors, by making certain courses of action possible and others impossible. On arriving at this position, the thesis draws on Waever and Hansen’s work on Nordic states and European integration. Whereas they describe themselves as postructuralist in their focus on the construction of structures of meaning through discourse, they acknowledge that they are “more structuralist”¹⁴² in their argument that particular conceptions of state, nation and people may have special staying-power. They suggest that, whilst multiple and competing discourses on identity may exist at the same time, some go deeper than others in terms of their sedimentation, making these particular narratives especially difficult to displace. They propose a layered discursive structure in which “deeper structures,” such as conceptions of state and nation, “are more solidly sedimented and more difficult to

¹⁴⁰ Browning book, p.48.

¹⁴¹ Ibid., p.14.

¹⁴² L. Hansen, ‘Introduction,’ in L. Hansen and O. Waever (eds.), *European Integration and National Identity – The Challenge of the Nordic States* (London: Routledge, 2002), p.5.

politicise and change,”¹⁴³ than surface layers concerning Europe. In this approach, agents’ ability to constitute Europe as a subject, and in so-doing articulate a particular ‘national interest’ in regards to integration, is restricted by a conceptual constellation which fuses state with nation and the People and sees any moves towards supra-statehood as inherently threatening.¹⁴⁴ In this view, the ability of agents to alter this deeper discursive structure on state and nation is severely limited, because of its sedimentation. This, in turn, affects their capacity to alter the constellation of meaning concerning Europe, because deep structures provide the foundation for layers closer to the surface.¹⁴⁵

What Waeuver and Hansen’s perspective offers, therefore, is a way of linking the critical constructivist/ poststructuralist conception of identity with a more structuralist approach according to which, whilst even the deepest structures of identity narratives may be rearticulated – as they are, after all, discursive constructs, - they are nonetheless highly resilient to alteration by agents. For this project, key in the development of such identity narratives are the processes of sedimentation and socialisation. When a particular narrative has been reproduced, along its broad lines, over the course of several generations, as it will be argued was the case in Romania, it becomes increasingly difficult to displace as the dominant representation of the Self and restrictive in terms of agents’ ability to alter its main tenets. That is the case, one would suggest, for two reasons. Firstly, picking up on a point made by Snyder *et al*, agents’ own rationality is shaped by the identity narrative in which they were socialised¹⁴⁶ and, as such, all interactions between agents and the structure are achieved from a position within rather than without the subjective reality generated by the original identity narrative. Consequently, certain courses of action will be perceived as possible, whilst others will be impossible; these limits ultimately also include the manner in which the Self and its interests may be (re)presented. Secondly, for a new narrative to take roots it needs to be accepted and, subsequently, socialised. As such, discourses which seem to go against the fundamental values of the dominant

¹⁴³ Waeuver (2002), p.32.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid., p.80.

¹⁴⁵ Browning, p.61.

¹⁴⁶ Snyder *et al* (1963), p.156.

representation in play, as Hansen shows in her case study of Denmark,¹⁴⁷ are particularly difficult to legitimate at societal level and therefore unlikely to gain traction. Whilst changes to these sedimented structures is possible, they must be incremental and occur in the opportune circumstances of a stable environment which would allow for their socialisation, in other words, for the shaping of a new generation of agents.

The benefit of this middle ground approach, as opposed to those which favour either agency or structure, is that it allows one to trace the influence of agents on structures of identity narratives and vice-versa. From this position, narrative alteration is a possibility, but not a necessity, as certain conditions must be fulfilled for it to occur. This allows the researcher to examine both continuity – the remit of most SC studies – and change – the focus of discursive approaches – in identity narratives and behaviour. Moreover, this perspective does not outright dismiss SC's assumption that identities are stable and unitary. The thesis argues that narratives of identity may indeed have a certain degree of stability, relative to the level of their sedimentation. Equally, in situations in which the dominant representation of the Self has become entrenched it will be difficult for alternative portrayals about the Self to emerge and even more difficult for them to become accepted at the societal level. However, what is key is that this is not a given. Such structures only come about in specific circumstances, as is the case of Romania and, as a result, the stability and unitary character of these structures must be interrogated, rather than taken for granted.

The Utility of a 'Small State' Case Study

Finally, this project adds to the field by focusing on a small state which has rarely been the subject of academic investigation. As has been outlined, most traditional analyses tend to concern major powers. Although there is increasing interest in the identity politics of minor powers,¹⁴⁸ this section of the field is still under-researched, particularly in Eastern Europe. A case-study of Romania therefore contributes to the

¹⁴⁷ L. Hansen, 'Sustaining Sovereignty: The Danish Approach to Europe,' in L. Hansen and O. Waever (eds.), *European Integration and National Identity – The Challenge of the Nordic States* (London: Routledge, 2002).

¹⁴⁸ Rasmussen (2005), Browning (2006, 2007, 2008, 2010).

understanding of identity-based motivations of a state which has an important role to play in the security and stability of the Eastern half of the continent. This is all the more the case as tensions between the European Union and NATO on the one hand, and Russia on the other, are at a post-Cold War high. This thesis agrees with both Rasmussen's point that the effects on the international environment caused by the actions of major powers are most accurately gauged in the behaviour of small states,¹⁴⁹ and Browning's argument that minor powers retain a certain freedom of action dictated by their perception of how 'smallness' affects them.¹⁵⁰ Romania's own narrative on identity has often highlighted the anxieties caused by its small-state condition, particularly in terms of the influence exerted by greater powers in its domestic affairs. It is equally true that Romania's history, and probably future, has been and will largely be determined by the balance of power and nature of interaction between Russia and the West.

That, however, does not mean that Romania's foreign policy should be seen simply as a predictable reaction to the interplay between great powers, nor that its agenda is set solely by its stronger allies. This thesis argues that this type of assessment is erroneous because it focuses on external pressures and discounts the internal motivations behind the state's behaviour. By adopting an identity-based perspective, Romania appears not as a powerless entity, guided in its behaviour by the great powers, but as an autonomous actor, which functions within a unique inter-subjective reality. The utility in studying it, then, lies in the acknowledgment that Romania also features unique patterns of behaviour which correspond to historically enduring claims about its identity. In Romania's case, these entrenched beliefs have influenced both its general foreign policy direction – namely an emphasis on its Western alliances – and its contemporary relations to its significant Others – the case studies focus on Russia, Hungary and the Republic of Moldova. In these three relationships particularly it will be argued that identity-based anxieties and prerogatives influence Romania's behaviour towards them. By studying the nature of these elements and their impact on foreign policy, this thesis aims to highlight the role Romania plays – or sees itself to

¹⁴⁹ Rasmussen (2005), p.68.

¹⁵⁰ Browning (2006), p.674.

be playing – in Eastern Europe and how its actions might shape the future stability and security of the region.

Overall, the benefit of this study is firstly that it fills a gap in the research, as analyses of this state's foreign policy specifically are rare, and generally adopt a neo-realist of neo-liberal perspective.¹⁵¹ From an identity-based approach, however, the motivations behind Romania's international behaviour appear more complex than these accounts would assume. On the other hand, focusing on Romania and the nature and quality of its relationship with its neighbours offers a clearer picture of the interaction between Eastern European states, both within the EU and NATO as well as their relations with Russia. This project captures the intricacy of these relations and shows how, in an interconnected world, the actions of even a small state may have profound regional or international repercussions. In this view, identity-based tensions between Romania and Hungary are significant because they may affect the stability and effectiveness of the EU and NATO, organisations both states are members of. Similarly, Romania's perceptions of the threat posed by Russia's annexation of Crimea differ significantly to those of many in the West, due to this state's portrayal of its historical experience of interaction with an expansionist Russia. Understanding the motivations behind Romania's behaviour, therefore, is not only a useful endeavour in itself, but is valuable in revealing the state of affairs in the region as a whole.

Conclusion

This chapter has placed the thesis in the field of constructivist studies into the link between national identity and foreign policy, in the area of intersection of SC and FPA. Finding a middle ground between the weak constructivist and predominantly structuralist approach of culture-focused SC and FPA's traditional agent-oriented perspective, as well as the deeper conception of identity employed by its critical constructivist strand, is not an easy feat. However, by developing a narrative theory of identity and coupling this with a balanced approach to the agent-structure debate, one may argue this is, indeed, possible. What is ultimately required in studying the influence of identity on behaviour – SC's main aim – is an expansion of focus, which

¹⁵¹ See, for instance Andreev (2009), Gallagher (1998), Ivanov (2010), Nicolescu (2010), Turnock (2001).

incorporates both *how* and *why* questions. Understanding identities as subjective stories about the Self allows one to effectively interrogate the role of agents in constructing identities through social processes such as the telling of national history. However, contrary to the position of most critical constructivist/poststructuralist authors reviewed in this chapter, the thesis argues that the deepest, most entrenched structures of meaning which articulate into identity narratives are particularly difficult to displace and, as a result, a certain dose of structuralism is required to truly grasp the relationship between agents and their identity. Finally, the thesis also adds to a broadening of the field of research, by focusing on a small power which has rarely been the subject of an identity-based analysis. By revealing the internal motivations behind Romania's actions, this thesis argues that not only are small states influenced by identity factors, but that their actions have repercussions at a regional and even international level. Ultimately, the point is that making sense and/or predicting the behaviour of small states requires, much as is the case with great powers, an understanding of the unique identities which shape the foreign policy decisions of such actors.

Chapter 2. Methods – Approach and Considerations

This chapter highlights the methodology employed for the purposes of this project as well as certain considerations related to it and is split into two sections. The first discusses the benefits of employing a constructivist approach in the study of Romanian identity and its bearing on foreign policy and locates the present thesis within existing debates about constructivism with reference to SC and FPA. Secondly, after a note on interviews and translations, the methodology of the project is expanded upon: a two-step approach is outlined, the first of which is concerned with the nature and development of the Romanian identity narrative and the second with the manner in which it influences behaviour. The section discusses the thesis' process of tackling the two steps in the core chapters and the sources it will utilise to this end.

Employing a Constructivist Approach

As mentioned previously, there exists a rather small selection of accounts of Romania's foreign policy agenda, covering either the period immediately following the Cold War (known domestically as 'the transition') or the time since the state's accession to NATO and the EU was achieved (2007 and onwards). The studies which do address Romania's foreign policy unsurprisingly outline the difficulty of transition and the slow pace of domestic reform meant to align the state to the standard required for membership of these two organisations. Traditional explanations offered of both the particular goal of accession and the challenges Romania faced in achieving it tend to focus on the general trend of former socialist states seeking membership of Euro-Atlantic organisations¹⁵² and on the continuation of communist era automatisms by Romania's political leadership, respectively.¹⁵³ In other words and to put it simply, the general perception is that Romania applied to join the EU and NATO because, as was the case with all the Eastern bloc states, this was the sensible thing to do, and had difficulties in accomplishing this aim because of the ill-judged decisions of its political elites. Since accession, the bulk of studies on Romania tend to focus on its policy of alignment with

¹⁵² Nicolescu (2010), p.65.

¹⁵³ See Gallagher (1995, 1998), Cinopoes, (2010) etc.

the general direction pursued by the international organisations it is a member of¹⁵⁴ and, again, the challenges posed by integration to a system still plagued by a communist legacy.¹⁵⁵

One would argue that what these accounts have in common is a mainstream materialist and rationalist approach to Romania's behaviour. Whether adopting a Neorealist or Neoliberal perspective, such studies have largely focused on what could be directly observed and empirically proven, with a preoccupation, as Browning notes, "with positing universal laws of rational behaviour."¹⁵⁶ Explanations highlighting the 'return to Europe' trend fits neatly in this category. On the other hand, perspectives which focus on Romania's little experience of being a democracy and strong communist legacy betray the type of treatment of ideational factors present in the work of Neoliberals such as Goldstein and Keohane.¹⁵⁷ In this view, whereas ideas are brought into the fold, with a focus on those drawn from communist experience, all these ideas do is obscure what would otherwise have been the rational and logical course of action to be undertaken during transition. In other words, explanations revolve around the notion that Romanian elites influenced by their communist era training were unable to discern their and their state's objective interest in carrying out reform and, as a result, the process of accession was prolonged and made needlessly more challenging.

However, the notion that Romania behaves as a rational actor driven by objective interests readily comprehensible to outside observers is problematic because, as Browning continues, "it entails a hollow conception of subjectivity and of identity."¹⁵⁸ Insofar as Romania has an identity, this is dictated by its capabilities and position within the international system, i.e. a small state of the former Eastern bloc. In what its political leadership is concerned, their identity and interests are captured under the label of 'unreformed communists.' However, this thesis argues that this approach

¹⁵⁴ Nicolescu (2010).

¹⁵⁵ See Gallagher (2009), Andreev (2009), for instance.

¹⁵⁶ Browning (2008), p.18.

¹⁵⁷ J. Goldstein and R. Keohane, 'Ideas and Foreign Policy: An Analytical Framework,' in J. Goldstein and R. Keohane, *Ideas and Foreign Policy – Beliefs, Institutions, and Political Change* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1993),

¹⁵⁸ Browning (2008), p.18.

betrays an impoverished appreciation of the internal motivations behind Romania's behaviour, both before and after accession, and therefore seeks to add another layer of understanding to this hitherto rarely explored dimension. Constructivism, on the other hand, offers an avenue into exploring identities as social constructs generated within the domestic environment in which the actor functions. In this view, far from being epiphenomenal, identities are at the very core of establishing what a rational course of action entails in a particular situation. A constructivist approach reveals Romania not as an actor whose interests are determined by material capabilities or a schematic representation of its elite's characteristics, but as one with its own viewpoint of the international realm and a perception of its position within it, and which articulates interests in response to both external and internal pressures as they are interpreted domestically.

In light of the criticism brought to mainstream perspectives on Romania's post-socialist foreign policy agenda, it should come as no surprise that this thesis employs a constructivist approach. Having said that, as the previous chapter made clear, there exists a variety of constructivist positions being adopted within both SC and FPA. There is certainly a profound difference, both in terms of claims about the nature of identity and the manner in which it should be studied, between the weak constructivism predominant in SC and the critical constructivist/postructuralist strand of FPA. The issues with weak constructivism's conception of identity have largely been outlined earlier, and this chapter will not go through them again in detail. However, the lack of interest in the processes through which identities are articulated is deeply problematic because it eschews from the complexities of identity construction and its links to foreign policy making. One such issue is its commitment to objectivism, and the notion that identity is a variable the influence over behaviour of which can be examined solely by recourse to historical recounting. By treating identity in this way these constructivists elude the fact that identities do not simply exist, but are subjective interpretations of who the actor was or is at any one point in time. Moreover, the processes of socialisation through which these interpretations become accepted as true are bracketed in their inquiry. As such, internal debates about the Self and the role of agents in altering or reinforcing particular structures of meaning are

inaccessible to their analysis. In the case of Romania, this perspective could not explain the way in which the story of Romanian identity was adapted to fit the challenges of transition or accession. Another significant drawback in this approach is that the theory cannot account for a specific, yet critical issues – that a particular representation of the Self is mutually constituted in relation to portrayals of Others. In other words, that it is through processes of differentiation and association that agents render intelligible the environment and actors around them, but also pin down the Self.¹⁵⁹ Since these portrayals generate interests to be pursued through foreign policy, changes in behaviour towards Others not only reflect a potential reassessment of these actors as friends or foes, but also signal a re-evaluation of critical precepts regarding the Self. Again, going back to the case study, weak constructivism cannot explain how changes in foreign policy towards Romania's Others became possible in contexts in which particular identity-related priorities concerning the Self were reordered in the face of an ever-changing domestic and international environments.

Overall, weak constructivism does not offer a comprehensive framework for studying Romanian identity or its link to the state's behaviour. Instead, this thesis draws on critical constructivist/poststructuralist thought in order to explore how identities are developed and function. It puts forward a narrative theory of identity, in which the stories we tell ourselves about who we are and the environment in which we function not only have a bearing on foreign policy and behaviour, but also make action meaningful.¹⁶⁰ In this sense, stories about identity are seen as both a result, because they are socialised, and a creator of the unique subjective reality in which the Self and Others are positioned.¹⁶¹ Acknowledging the importance of discourse in the constitution of the Self, a crucial role in the generation of narratives on identity is attributed to the telling of national history. The thesis argues that, by constructing stories about historical events and relationships, it becomes possible to render the present in a manner which is intelligible to us. The inextricable link between historical and identity narratives lies in the notion that 'who we were' legitimates a particular

¹⁵⁹ Neumann (1995), p.27.

¹⁶⁰ Browning (2008), p.45.

¹⁶¹ Ibid., p.46.

representation of 'who we are,' but also 'who we should be.' Stories about the past Self therefore become vehicles for the dissemination of specific identity narratives and the interests which flow from them. As a result, one of the main aims of this thesis is to show how the Romanian narrative on history has been developed and explore the main identity-related themes which emerge from it. Moreover, because the Self and Others are mutually constituted, the project will also show how, throughout the historical narrative, particular representations of three significant Others are generated in the course of constituting the Romanian Self, through processes of differentiation and association.

Having said that, where the thesis diverges from the vast majority of critical constructivist/poststructuralist studies and draws on the structuralism of SC and, importantly, the work of Waever and Hansen, is on the issue of the endurance of identity narratives. The project argues that particular structures of meaning, once socialised, acquire a sedimented quality. The more a story about the Self is reproduced, therefore, the more it becomes entrenched and difficult to displace. This is exactly the case, it will be argued, in the case of Romania, where the historical and identity narratives have been disseminated along the same lines over several generations. As a result, specific conceptions about the nature of the Romanian Self and its Others have become rooted in the Romanian imaginary and are highly influential and resilient to change. For instance, this applies to notions about what the role of the Romanian state is and the threatening nature of Hungary and Russia, as Romania's historical foes. From these deepest structures of meaning emerge particular anxieties – 'this cannot be done' – and prerogatives – 'this must be done' – which generate particular attitudes and interests that are pursued through both domestic and foreign policy. Maintaining territorial integrity or ensuring the security and sovereignty of the state fall into this category. In acknowledging the role of agency, however, this is not to say that these structures are completely rigid and their bearing over agents is uniform.

There will be situations in which certain prerogatives generate conflicting goals requiring agents to give one antecedence over the other. Equally, the relative strength

of anxieties is not constant over time and this is when the influence of the respective structures of meaning over agents is diminished. Indeed, anxieties may recede or become augmented, because they respond to changes in both the domestic and external environments, or rather agents' interpretation of them. For instance, apprehension over relations with a threatening Other may diminish if that Other ceases to be considered a threat. It will be argued that in periods such as these, when anxieties surrounding particular issues are low with multiple goals in play, agents enjoy more freedom in reordering priorities, adopting different attitudes and articulating new interests in connection to them. For example, the goal of maintaining distance from a previously threatening Other may be superseded by that of accession to an international organisation which presupposes cooperation with this Other and therefore an interest in establishing amiable relations may be articulated. This, it will be argued, are precisely the circumstances which saw a significant *détente* in the relationship between Romania and Hungary in the 1990s. Because these goals – distance from Hungary and accession to the EU and NATO, – both of which are rooted in the identity narrative and the prerogatives of ensuring state security, sovereignty and unity - cannot be secured at the same time, agents must priorities one over the other. This ordering of priorities depends both on whether Hungary is perceived as a threat and the relative extent to which it is considered that the state will benefit from a change in attitude. Agents' own interpretation of the domestic and international environments is therefore key in the process of establishing priorities, while the structure of the identity narrative is malleable enough to allow for this type of changes. This, in effect, explains why and how the same identity narrative may legitimate a broad spectrum of behaviours¹⁶² and reveals agency and structure as mutually constituted, with each exerting a certain level of influence, without holding dominion, over the other.

Through this approach, the thesis seeks to bridge the various constructivist positions employed within SC and FPA. Similarly to Waever and Hansen, one would describe it as critical constructivist in its approach to the study of identity and the construction of structures of meaning. However, it remains more structuralist than other studies due

¹⁶² Waever (2002), p.22.

to its assumption that sedimented identity narratives have a certain resilience to change and, therefore, a bearing on agents, by shaping notions of national interest and generating prerogatives and red-lines. Nonetheless, in acknowledging agents' role in constructing identity narratives in the first place and their ability to interact with even the deepest structures of meaning, the thesis departs from the 'thoroughgoing' structuralism of SC, treading the middle ground in what concerns the agent-structure debate. This approach, however, poses a number of methodological challenges, in terms of how exactly one may go about analysing both the nature and content as well as the influence of sedimented claims about identity on state behaviour. Consequently, the following section deals with the project's methodology.

Methodology

A Note on Interviews and Romanian Sources

For the purposes of this research several interviews with Romanian politicians and academics were conducted in Bucharest, in June 2014. The original idea was that they would provide the primary accounts and interpretations of Romania's foreign policy agenda. However, it soon became obvious that there was significant overlap in the information gathered from the respondents, such as university lecturers, a liberal politician and a former Minister of Culture. On Romania's foreign policy direction and challenges posed by communism during transition, for instance, there was almost complete alignment. The reason behind this, one would suggest, is that the general assessment of the issues involved in the subject matter addressed by this project, such as the ones mentioned above, are not areas of controversy within Romanian society at the moment. Therefore, it was considered that additional interviews were unlikely to contribute any significant additional information. As a result, the thesis shifted focus to coupling the data collected from these interviews with that of other primary sources, such as statements from officials, polls and statistics, and analyses of events already available in the media. The information from the interviews is used predominantly in Chapter 5, in the section on Romania's contemporary foreign policy agenda. However, the respondents' input is also threaded throughout the other core chapters, offering

primary information on the nature of transition and the relationship with Russia, the Hungarian minority and the Republic of Moldova.¹⁶³

A second matter which should be expanded upon concerns the material in Romanian utilised by this project. Several such sources have been employed, such as books, journal and newspaper articles, online material, official statements, statistics, the interviews conducted and even fragments of poems or songs, such as the national anthem. All translations from Romanian to English are the author's own and the sources in Romanian are referenced by the original title followed by its translation into English in square brackets.

This section will now move on to expand on the methods used in answering the thesis' main research question 'What is the impact of national identity on Romania's foreign policy agenda?' Assessing the influence of the identity, understood as a narrative structure, on behaviour from a constructivist perspective entails two separate steps. The first is examining the nature and content of Romania's identity narrative, whilst the second requires overlaying this representation on top of the state's contemporary behaviour in order to examine how the narrative feeds into behaviour. For purpose of clarity, both will be explained in turn.

The Nature and Content of the Romanian Identity Narrative

In terms of the nature and content of the Romanian narrative on identity, the challenge is in establishing its essential features, how they have developed, as well as the reasons why certain concepts hold a particular significance. In a sense, this is an exercise in posing at least some of Doty's *how-possible* questions.¹⁶⁴ In answering them, this thesis holds that history, or the telling of history, is central. If identity is not taken as a given, then showing how and which certain tenets became entrenched in the Romanian imaginary requires a historical approach. Indeed, for the purposes of this project, history is central to the construction of identity narratives, for two reasons. Firstly, historical experiences shape actors' perceptions of themselves and the

¹⁶³ As an additional note, the transcripts of these interviews are in the author's possession.

¹⁶⁴ Doty (1993).

world around them, much like Breuning has argued.¹⁶⁵ Secondly, it is largely through historical narratives that a particular story about identity is perpetuated.¹⁶⁶ Coupled with elite discourse, a particular telling of history offers hints as to the representation of the Self and Others in play at that time. The narrative of history and that of identity are inherently interlinked – history telling perpetuates a certain portrayal of the Self and Other, thereby socialising individuals in a specific identity narrative, whilst alterations to it either signal the emergence of or actively create a new one.

As a result, the requirements of this step are twofold – firstly, one must engage with Romanian history, with particular focus on the manner in which its experiences have been portrayed; and, secondly, from this reading of the historical narrative, one must establish what the main features of the identity narrative – termed themes – are and how or to what extent the story has been altered over time.

It is important to note that, whilst the narrative on Romanian national identity begins in earnest in the nineteenth century, it nonetheless employs the entirety of Romanians' historical experiences, from their ethno-genesis to modern times, in building the representation of the Self and Others. Therefore, whilst what is of interest here are tellings of Romania's history of the modern era, the process of examining the identity narrative requires engaging with Romania's history as a whole. What the project aims to achieve, therefore, is a tableau of domestic interpretations of Romanian history with a focus on the identitary themes which they seek to emphasise. This reproducing of the historical narrative draws on a number of sources, from the nineteenth century and to the present day – some are concerned specifically with Romania's history, such as the works of Nicolae Iorga (1830), Henris Stahl (1922), Fischer-Galati (1970), Neagu Djuvara (2010) and Florin Constantiniu (2011). Others, such as Lucian Boia (2011, 2012) or Mihai Milca (2010), offer a historical perspective on the development of Romanian identity. The former is a reputed contemporary Romanian historian but his work also delves into the myths prevalent in Romanian society (*Istorie Și Mit În Conștiința Românească [History and Myth in Romanian*

¹⁶⁵ Breuning (2007).

¹⁶⁶ Browning (2008).

Consciousness], 2011) and also the manner in which Romania has adapted, or rather has failed to adapt, to Euro-Atlantic integration (*Romania, Tara de frontiera a Europei* [*Romania, Frontier State of Europe*], 2012). Sociologist Mihai Milca, on the other hand, offers a chronology of the development of the Romanian states whilst also juxtaposing Romanian identity to that of the European version (*Identitate Românească și Europeană* [*Romanian and European Identity*], 2010). Finally, contemporaneous accounts of events have also been utilised to show perceptions of certain events at the time when they occurred – the magazine articles of Kirileanu (1909) or Rebreanu (1940), or the revolutionary address of Balcescu (1847), are examples of these. The interest in these sources is not only in information gathering, but also, more importantly, the manner in which history is being narrated. The exposition itself offers clues into what aspects of the Romanian identity narrative are in play and how they are contextually framed.

On the other hand, in establishing the themes of the identity narrative the project drew on some of the major domestic works on the Romanian character, psychology, and mythology. From the earlier period of the beginning of the twentieth century, the seminal works of Draghicescu (1907) and Radulescu-Motru (1937) were of particular interest. These were coupled with modern analyses such as Boia (2011, 2012) or Milca (2010) in which the concern with both the historical and identity narratives is evident. Finally, the work of Dutceac-Segesten (2010), which offers insight into Romanians' Self and Other image myth-building through an examination of history text-books, further strengthens the connection between the telling of history and identity construction. As such, it is an invaluable source for this project, not least because it shows how the socialisation of a particular narrative on identity is achieved. From these sources, the project identified the main recurring themes and classified them as the Foundation Myths, consisting of Origins, Habitus and Religion; the Besieged Fortress, with victimisation and resistance as two sides of the same coin; and the theme of Unity, with its emphasis on the nation-state.

As a caveat, this project does not make the pretence that these themes or the manner in which they are treated are or is exhaustive. Indeed, there are aspects relevant to

representations of the Romanian Self which are not addressed here – one of the more obvious ones is the conundrum of whether Romania belongs in the East or the West. On the other hand, there are complexities within each theme which have not been analysed – in the Origins theme, for instance, over time there has been intense discussion on whether the Roman or Dacian roots are most valuable to the Romanian character. Why some themes and aspects pertaining to them have been preferred over others is, to a large extent, a subjective matter. What one would argue is that, overall, the aim of the thesis is to show how enduring claims about Romanian identity influence behaviour and, as such, the choice of themes must be relevant to this endeavour – the East-West debate has predominantly been settled in the aftermath of the end of the Cold War; Romania can certainly not be argued to be wavering between pro-Western and pro-Eastern directions. On the other hand, that which divides those who favoured, at one point or another, the Roman or Dacian roots of the Romanian people is less significant, one would argue, than that which unites them – that the origins of Romanians mark them out as special, or peculiar within their regional setting. As such, although there is a danger of over-simplifying the content and history of debate on Romanian identity, the thesis addresses what are considered to be, subjectively of course, both the dominant and most relevant features of the narrative.

A similar discussion should follow on the choice of sources. There are, of course, many accounts of Romanian history and psychology, some of which have not been included in this project. Working out which sources to utilise and which to omit is, again, a subjective but necessary process. Space does not allow for an exhaustive representation of either Romania's history or identity narrative. As such, the accounts used were those deemed of most interest, either because their authors or their work are particularly reputable – Nicolae Iorga and Nicolae Balcescu, for instance, are some of the most celebrated personalities of Romania's unification period, due to their political activism but also their historical work; Draghicescu and Radulescu-Motru's accounts are most influential in the field of Romanian identity, or 'psychology' as it was then referred to, whilst Boia and Constantiniu are amongst the major contemporary Romanian historians. Other, more obscure sources, have been employed because they confirm or add to the more prominent accounts –

stenographer and historian Henric Stahl's lecture on the history of the Romanian people (1922), lawyer Sofronie's article on the historic and juridical significance of the unification of 1918 (1942) or Fischer-Galati's *History of Twentieth Century Rumania* (sic) (1970) fall into this category. What the thesis is attempting to achieve is a rendering of Romania's identity narrative, but it also aims to highlight the consistency across the literature with which its main tenets are depicted. As a result, all these sources are valuable in their input, and whilst, many others are not addressed, the ones presented are relevant to this inquiry.

Returning to the issue at hand, the project traces the themes of the Romanian identity narrative and the manner in which they emerge from the telling of history. The historical approach is evident in the structure of Chapter 3, which covers this issue. The chapter is divided into four historical periods, Antiquity, Middle-Ages, Modernity and Communism. To each of the first three are assigned the major themes which predominate their interpretation. As a result, the historical narrative of Antiquity is concerned with the Foundation Myths, the Middle Ages with the Besieged Fortress and Modernity with Unity. The thesis shows how these aspects emerge from the particular narration of each individual period, but also how they feed into one-another. For instance, the Foundation Myths are seen as motivation for Romanians' resistance against foreign influence during the Middle Ages and both the Foundation Myths and the Besieged Fortress are fundamental in justifying Unity between the three provinces in the Modern era. The aim is to show not only which theme is dominant within a certain period, but also how they come together in a particular articulation of the image of Self and Other.

By matching up modern and contemporary accounts, a picture of the continuity of the identity narrative is revealed through the perpetuation of a particular telling of history. Continuity in all the major aspects of the identity narrative is considered to be one of its major hallmarks and, importantly, at the root of today's attitudes towards its significant Others – Russia and Hungary. The thesis accounts for this endurance by examining the factors in play between the creation of the Romanian nation-state and the end of Second World War, in particular the actions of Russia and Hungary which

sedimented the perception of the two actors as existential threats and ensured the continued salience of the themes of Unity and Besieged Fortress. Finally, the chapter turns to the impact of the Communist era, and especially Nicolae Ceausescu's regime, in buttressing and augmenting the main features of the identity narrative by examining both primary sources, works published or republished in the period concerned with the Romanian 'national character,' many of which have been mentioned above, as well as secondary accounts assessing the repercussions of Ceausescu's actions on Romanians' perceptions of the Self and Russian and Hungarian Others. The aim of this section is to show how Ceausescu's hyper version, preoccupied predominantly with the uniqueness of Romanians, built on already existing representations to ensure the reproducing of a narrative of identity in which the contrast between Self and Other is sharpened. As a result, both external factors, or their domestic interpretation, and agency play a significant role in the perpetuation of Romanian narrative of identity up to the anti-communist revolution of 1989.

The final stage is to bring the analysis into the contemporary era, namely after the 1989 uprising. The transition period of the 1990s is argued to have been decisive in the version of the national identity narrative in play today, not least because the fall of the communist regime qualifies as the type of historic shock which normally leads to a re-evaluation of identities. As a result, the thesis pays particular attention to the role played by transition governments, and particularly those of Ion Iliescu, in order to determine both the extent to which claims about identity were questioned and how the communist legacy was negotiated. Chapter 4 analyses how the identity narrative fed into early electoral contests and was utilised by Iliescu's reformed communists to justify their election. Furthermore, the thesis shows how, through its actions and rhetoric, the government ensured the perpetuation of a version of the narrative which, whilst it eliminated the communist component, was otherwise indistinguishable from earlier dominant representations of the Self and Other. As a result, it will be argued, the contemporary self-image of Romanians, as well as their perception of their significant Others, remained largely unaltered. For this purpose, the thesis employs a variety of sources, including primary ones, such as parliamentary debates and interviews, and secondary domestic and Western accounts, including newspaper

articles, assessing the nature of the transition period. The input of foreign observers, such as Cipkowski (1991), Gilberg (1990), Gallagher (1995, 1998, 2009) and Turnock (2001) is valuable in achieving a balanced and objective overview of the events, whilst domestic sources offer insight into how these were perceived on the ground. Overall, this section completes the tableau of the development and main characteristic of the Romanian identity narrative and emphasises the role of agency, this time of Iliescu's regime, in ensuring its continuity.

The Influence of Identity on Behaviour

The second step entails overlaying the main precepts of the Romanian identity narrative onto the state's international behaviour since the 1989 revolution. The thesis aims to achieve this by addressing both dimensions of identity, concerning the Self and the Other. On the one hand, through understanding Romanians' perception of the Self and, particularly, what they viewed to be Romania's place in the post-Cold War international environment, one might shed light on the state's general foreign policy direction as well as how Bucharest went about achieving its goals. Representations of Others, meanwhile, set these goals into a broader context and serve to explain the types of relations established between Romania and these actors. The manner in which the identity narrative influences behaviour, this thesis argues, is by generating certain priorities or red-lines in what concerns the actions of the state. In other words, it acts to create particular prerogatives, anxieties, and attitudes towards other actors on the international stage and it is through understanding these by-products of the identity narrative that one may accurately account for a state's behaviour.

As such, Chapter 4 is concerned with the transition period from communism to attaining membership of EU and NATO (1989-2007). This span of nearly twenty years is considered decisive in establishing and consolidating Romania's contemporary foreign policy agenda. The thesis identifies two predominant and ultimately conflicting attitudes rooted in its national identity narrative which had a significant impact on Romania's behaviour in this period. The first is its foreign policy priority, based on the unanimous desire to join the West, which dominated the entire transition period. Integration would satisfy the prerogative of ensuring the security of the state rooted in

the Unity theme and, to no lesser extent, its economic development. The second was an anxiety manifesting in the resistance to change of both elites and the general population in play in the first half of the 1990s, a legacy of the communist period in equal measure to that of the historical continuity of its identity narrative. The chapter examines how these two attitudes created both opportunities and challenges for Romanian transition governments, until the latter attitude receded after 1996. For this purpose, the domestic reforms which were essential in achieving membership of EU and NATO are analysed, with particular emphasis on the difficulties of economic reform and the minority question, namely the issue of awarding group rights to Romania's significant Hungarian minority. The sources employed in this section are accounts of Romania's experience of transition, both domestic and international, mentioned above. Additionally, primary sources such as the interviews conducted for this project and parliamentary debates are also utilised. What this section ultimately aims to achieve is a highlighting of the crucial discrepancy between Romania's behaviour on the international and domestic stages, in that it wished to alter its global status without its traditional *modus vivendi* being affected. Both these aspects are argued to be rooted in its sedimented portrayal of the Self.

Following on from this, the thesis examines the nature of Romania's foreign policy direction after accession, at the beginning of Chapter 5, and its relationships with its significant Others, from the transition period up to this day. For this purpose, three case studies have been chosen, namely Romania's relations with Russia, Hungary and the Republic of Moldova, each of them having been designated a specific chapter. The reason why the thesis focuses on these, rather than other relationships, is primarily because of their significance in the Romanian view. Russia and Hungary emerge from the historical and identity narrative as the main threatening Others, whilst the Republic of Moldova is, conversely, viewed as an Estranged Self. The continuity of the main aspects of the identity narrative, on the other hand, is consequential to the perpetuation of a particular representation of these actors, which influences Romanian attitudes towards them.

The three case study chapters have similar structures. First the thesis identifies the main attitudes Romania exhibits towards these three actors, as well as the areas of sensitivity relevant to their relationship. In the case of Russia and Hungary, the main identity-based attitude is one of distrust, anxiety and fear over their actions, rooted in the theme of the Besieged Fortress. The relationship between Romania and Russia is marked by a view of the Other as expansionist and a danger to Romania's independence, security and close relations with the Republic of Moldova. On the other hand, the threat perception where Hungary is concerned mainly revolves around the preservation of the territorial integrity and sovereignty of the Romanian state and the issue of Transylvania as a disputed region between the two actors. In what Moldova is concerned, the thesis argues that Romanians' attitude is informed by both the Foundation Myths and the theme of Unity. Moldova is viewed as an Estranged Romanian Self, with the same origins and identity markers, leading to a perception that *they are like us*. On the other hand, the forced separation of Moldova from Romania is seen as an inherent historical injustice, strengthening both the case of Russia as an existential threat, and the Romanian interest in the affairs of Chisinau.

Once these attitudes are outlined, the thesis examines Romania's behaviour in relation to each of these actors, accounting for both the retreat and augmentation of identity factors in specific contexts. It does so in chronological manner, examining the major events which have defined their post-1989 relationship. In order to achieve this, the thesis draws on primary accounts – the interviews conducted by the author, parliamentary debates and official statements – and secondary sources assessing either the events themselves or their consequences. Many of the sources utilised in these chapters have already been mentioned: Boia (2011, 2012) or Dutceac-Segesten (2010), for instance, are points of reference throughout the thesis. Additionally, each chapter utilises specific sources concerned with the respective relationship or the activities of that actor. These include books, journal and newspaper articles, and declarations by various organisations, such as NATO or the Unionist Platform Action 2012. In the case of Russia, the work of Eurasianist theorist Dughin (2011) is employed, as is the work on geopolitics by Romanian political commentator Gusa (2011), that on Russian-Romanian relations of diplomats Stefureac (2015) and Maior (2015), as well as

various articles by sociologist Dan Dungaciu (2011, 2015, 2016). In the case of Hungary sources consulted include Salat's chapter on the failed reconciliation between the two states after 1996 (2013), and Kulcsar and Bradatan's article on Hungarian domestic politics (2007). In the case study of Romania's relationship with the Republic of Moldova, some of the main sources include Angelescu's assessment of the development of Romania's post-socialist relations with actors in Eastern Europe and the Black Sea region (2011), Cash's article on Moldovan identity (2007), or that of Panici on Romanian nationalism in the Republic of Moldova (2003). Additionally, all three chapters feature articles from Romania's main news agencies, *Agerpres*, *Mediafax*, and *Hotnews*, as well as statistics and opinion polls conducted by INSCOP and IRES, as two of the most cited such sources by the Romanian media.

On this note, the thesis finally offers a prediction of Romania's future relationship with these actors, as well as its foreign policy direction more broadly. It does this by drawing on scenarios considered by Romanian elites in light of present international developments – the conflict in Eastern Ukraine or Hungary's nationalist and eastern shift are examples of this. What is of interest here is not whether these scenarios are probable, or even plausible, but the fact that Romanians perceive them as such. That is because this thesis argues that, within its intersubjective reality, the motivations behind Romania's actions are rooted in perceptions of current, as well as future, threats and opportunities. The fact that these scenarios are being contemplated, therefore, offers hints at Romania's present behaviour but also the types of actions it is likely to consider in the future. With the caveat that such developments are contingent on a continuation of current circumstances, one would argue that identity offers an avenue for not only accounting for, but also predicting state behaviour. With this, it is aimed, a comprehensive insight into the influence of entrenched beliefs about Romanian identity over the state's relationship with these actors, and the behaviour which flows from them, will be achieved.

Conclusion

This chapter has outlined the thesis' approach and methodology to studying the link between the Romanian identity narrative and the state's foreign policy agenda. As

such, stories about identity, and the inter-subjective reality they create, are the main focus of this project. That is because these narratives confer meaning on cultural factors, such as language, religion, geography, history and ethnicity and consequently shape the manner in which Romanians perceive themselves in relation to those around them. The following chapters will examine how this particular image of the Self and Other was constructed and perpetuated in order to create the identity narrative in play today. It will be shown how the cultural elements mentioned above were utilised to justify a specific destiny for Romanians, that of being united, and an equally important role for the state, to protect this unity and the Romanian character. Finally, the thesis will examine how the attitudes which flow from this narrative feed into Romania's current international behaviour, both in terms of satisfying the identity-prerogatives set by the portrayal of the Self, but also through the anxieties and affinities which emerge from the representation of the Others.

Table 1. Major Events of Romanian History and the Identity Narrative Themes They Are Subscribed To

Foundation Myths	106 A.D.	Dacia is colonised by Rome
	271 A.D.	Romans retreat from the region
	Circa 3rd century	Christianisation of Dacia
Besieged Fortress	11th century	Hungarians begin their colonisation of Transylvania, achieved by the end of the century
	1330	Wallachia is established, following a victory against the Hungarian troops
	1365	Moldavia is also created, in similar circumstances
	1366	Hungarian king decrees that nobility in Transylvania should be conditioned by affiliation to the Catholic faith
	1437	<i>Unio Trium Nationum</i> certifies Romanian Transylvanians as tolerated nation and eliminates political rights.
	1476	Wallachia becomes a permanent vassal to the Ottoman Empire
	1512	Moldavia, similarly, recognises the Ottoman Empire as suzerain
Unity	1791	<i>Supplex Libellus Valachorum</i> is published, calling for equality of rights for Transylvanian Romanians. The first document which introduces nationhood as a basis for emancipation
	1812	Moldavia is partitioned. Eastern Moldavia is placed under Tsarist rule and becomes known as Bessarabia
	1848	Failed revolution, had as express goal unification
	1859 (24 January)	Wallachia unites with Western Moldova to form the first state of Romania
	1878	The Old Kingdom achieves independence from the Ottoman Empire
	1916	Romania enters the first World War on the side of the Entente, with the express goal of gaining Transylvania
	1918	The First World War ends and the Dual Monarchy and Tsarist Empire collapse. Transylvania and Bessarabia are awarded to Romania
	1918 (1 December)	Greater Romania is proclaimed. The new state approximates the territory inhabited by Romanian ethnics.
Besieged Fortress & Unity	1940	A year of territorial losses. A Soviet ultimatum results in the ceding of Bessarabia and Northern Bukovina (June). Hungary is awarded Northern Transylvania (August) and Bulgaria gains the Cadrilater (September).

	1941	Romania joins the Second World War on the side of the Axis with the goal of winning back Bessarabia, which is quickly occupied by German and Romania troops
	1944	The tide of the war is changing. Romania turns the guns on Germany and begins fighting on the side of the Allies
	1945	The Second World War ends. Romania is considered a defeated state. Northern Transylvania is returned, but Bessarabia is once again ceded to Russia. Bessarabia is included in the Moldavian ASSR (hitherto Transnistria) and becomes a fully fledged Soviet Republic
Communism	1948	The Moscow backed Communist Party comes to power in Romania
	1965	Nicolae Ceausescu becomes Secretary General of the Communist Party. Romania begins its break from Russia.
	1968	Ceausescu condemns the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia.

Chapter 3. Romanian History and Identity – a National Obsession with Uniqueness

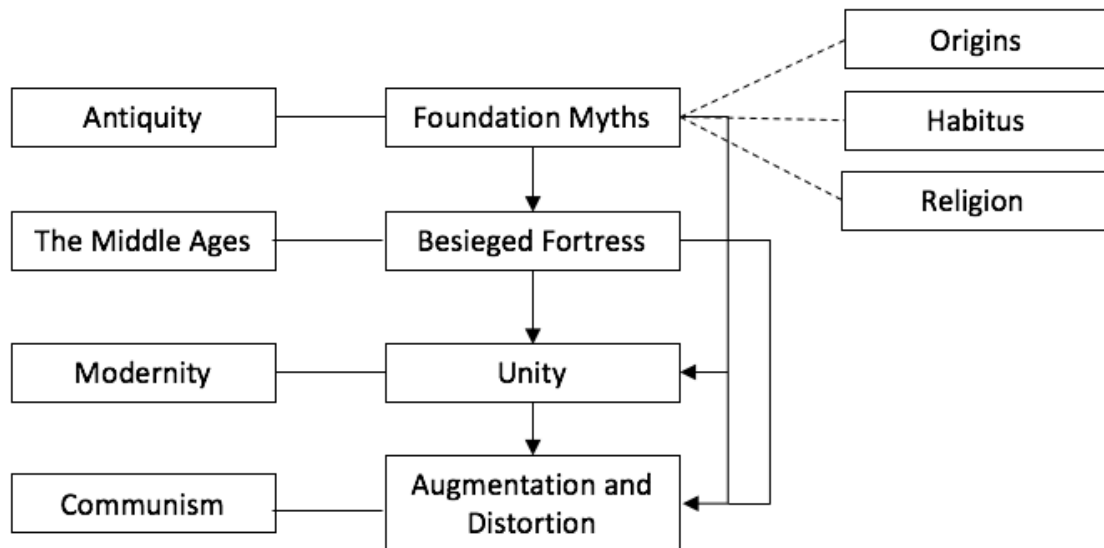


Figure 1. The main periods of Romanian history and their corresponding themes.

Introduction

This chapter's main aim is to outline the major themes of the Romanian identity narrative as they crystallised in the formative period of the nineteenth and early twentieth century, highlighting their perpetuation into the modern historical narrative. The chapter begins with a discussion of continuity of the identity narrative in the Romanian context. The following three sections examine the narrative of the three main periods of Romanian history and the identity themes which emerge most prominently from them. As such, the era of Antiquity corresponds to the Foundation Myths – Origins, the Habitus and Religion, – the bedrock of the narrative on the Romanian character's uniqueness. To the Middle Ages is conscribed the theme of Besieged Fortress, the identity manifestation of a history of oppression, whilst Modernity is marked by the emergence of the theme of Unity, which brings together the first two themes. Both the identity uniqueness of the Romanian people and their unjust historical experience vindicate the creation of a national state within which the special destiny of Romanians may be fulfilled. The continuity of this historical narrative into the contemporary era, as a hallmark of the Romanian identity narrative, is

explored with reference to external circumstances, namely perceptions over the actions of the Others, but also in relation to the role played by Nicolae Ceausescu's regime during the final period, Communism. Whilst adding nothing new to the narrative, Ceausescu's regime augments its main features, particularly in regards to Romanian uniqueness and the theme of Unity, thereby entrenching the Self-Other contrast with Hungary and Russia. The chapter ends with an assessment of the Romanian identity narrative in play at the end of the Communist period, and the impact of agency on this structure.

The Continuity of the Romanian Identity Narrative

Dutceac-Segesten wrote, "the national project is an ode to particularism, to uniqueness even. Every nation attempts to describe itself as an exceptional combination of characteristics, hand-picked to define the true soul of the community."¹⁶⁷ This quote neatly applies to Romanians, a people concerned with their national character both before and after the creation of their state. As Lucian Boia argues, to this day "the endeavour to uncover 'what it means to be Romanian' seems far from having exhausted its resources and arguments. One might even argue that the first trait of Romanians is the obsession with their own identity."¹⁶⁸ Indeed, in researching the subject of Romanian identity one has discovered a continued effort by local historians, sociologists and philosophers to 'make sense' of Romanians, what is 'special' about Romanians, and establish their destiny, in other words their rightful place within Europe and the wider international community. Whilst this may, in itself, not be peculiar to Romanians, what is perhaps surprising is the reproduction of the original identity narrative which emerged in the nineteenth and early twentieth century, and was aimed specifically at the justification of the creation of a Romanian national state, to this day. This is apparent in the remarkable continuity of the historical narrative through which claims about identity are socialised. A particular view of history is perpetuated, ensuring that portrayals of the Self and Others follow

¹⁶⁷ A. Dutceac-Segesten, *Myth, Identity, and Conflict – A Comparative Analysis of Romanian and Serbian History Textbooks* (Plymouth: Lexington Books, 2011) p.122.

¹⁶⁸ L. Boia, *Istorie Și Mit În Conștiința Românească [History and Myth in Romanian Consciousness]* 2nd Edition (Bucharest: Humanitas, 2011), pp.245-246.

similar patterns of representation. As sociologist Constantin Schifirnet has argued, “in what concerns the expression of Romanian national character traits, a XXI century Romanian is not entirely different from the XIX century Romanian. Therefore, Romanian identity becomes a constant of the Romanian national character.”¹⁶⁹

This ensures a certain level of solidarity and uniformity of character not only between Romanians of a certain period, but across generations. The link with the past becomes a hallmark of the identity narrative as memories of even the distant events are retained in the contemporary imaginary and translated into modern versions of the narrative. As Schifirnet continues, “it [Romanian identity] has its origin in a past, and is therefore subscribed to a historic and generational continuity. Romanians today are identical, in certain ethnic and spiritual traits, to Romanians from across the ages.”¹⁷⁰ This narrative, however, is a double edged sword. On the one hand, the actualisation of the past has the effect of creating a durable sense of national identity, the features of which show remarkable continuity, precisely because it draws on times past: “we live in the present, but we relate ourselves to our origins, we have an incontestable identity, but we harness it through the identity of our ancestors.”¹⁷¹ On the other hand, a certain portrayal of the Self brings with it a corresponding representation of the Others, which is similarly perpetuated. As such, the antagonisms with Hungary and Russia from the formative era of the Romanian state are reproduced, ensuring that the character of these Others as essentially threatening is reinforced. In what is, essentially, a vicious cycle, these images of the Others ensure the continued salience of the main features of the Self – the desire to affirm its uniqueness and protect it from foreign influences. In the following sections, the continuity of the historical narrative will be outlined, coupled, finally, with an assessment of the Ceausecu regime’s particular impact on the identity narrative.

¹⁶⁹ C. Schifirnet, ‘Identitate Romaneasca in Contextul Modernitatii Tendentiale [The Romanian Identity in the Context of Trend-Setting Modernity],’ *Revista Romana de Sociologie [The Romanian Journal of Sociology]* (new series) XX: 5-6 (2009), p.474.

¹⁷⁰ Ibid., p.473.

¹⁷¹ Boia (2011), p.188.

Origins

For Romanians, both history and identity begin at the beginning. The Self and the Other are two sides of the same coin, in other words, the more effort is poured in accentuating one, the stronger the contrast is built between the two. In the Romanian imaginary, differentiation from its neighbours has its roots in their people's unique common ancestry – as Mihai Milca argues, “Romanian identity is built *sui generis* on an inheritance resulted from the symbiosis of the Daco-Roman strands.”¹⁷² This notion is not new; it picks up on earlier works on what was then termed ‘Romanian psychology’: in 1907 Dumitru Draghicescu argued that “the soul and character of a people are decided by (...) [first among three aspects] the basic ethnic element.”¹⁷³ In 1937, another important sociological work by Constantin Radulescu-Motru also emphasised origins as the hallmark of a people's psychology: “the spiritual traits of a nation are conditioned by (...) the hereditary biological fundament of the people.”¹⁷⁴

In Romania, this ‘fundament’ is considered unique in the region. Romanians are the result of the Roman colonisation of the ancient region of Dacia, following a short war in 105-106 AD. This people, as their name suggest, are, therefore, of Latin origin, delineating them from the Others of Eastern Europe or the Balkans; these groups are generally of Slav, Turkic or Magyar (Hungarian) descent. Although the Romans retreated from Dacia in 271 AD, their legacy was significant, both at the time and subsequently, particularly in what concerns language. The Romanian language is based on a form of late Latin, which, although exposed to Slavic influences later on, remains closely related to Western Latin languages and, therefore, essentially unlike any other Eastern dialects. As such, as Dutceac-Segesten points out, “language acted from the very beginning as an obvious dissimilarity with respect to the groups living in the

¹⁷² M. Milca, *Identitate Românească și Europeană [Romanian and European Identity]* (Bucharest: Virtual, 2010), p.27.

¹⁷³ D. Draghicescu, *Din Psihologia Poporului Român [From the Psychology of the Romanian People]* (Bucharest: Albatros, reprinted in 1995 original 1907), p.7.

¹⁷⁴ C. Radulescu-Motru, *Psihologia Poporului Român [The Psychology of the Romanian People]* (Bucharest: Paideia, reprinted in 1999 original 1937), p.11.

vicinity and became the primary marker for group identity.”¹⁷⁵ In the absence of statehood, language is the main unifying feature shared by all Romanians and occupies an important position in the articulation of the narrative concerning Romanians’ spiritual unity. This is evident in a 1922 lecture by graphologist and historian Henric Stahl called the ancient Romanian territory “the land of all of a single tongue.”¹⁷⁶

Habitus

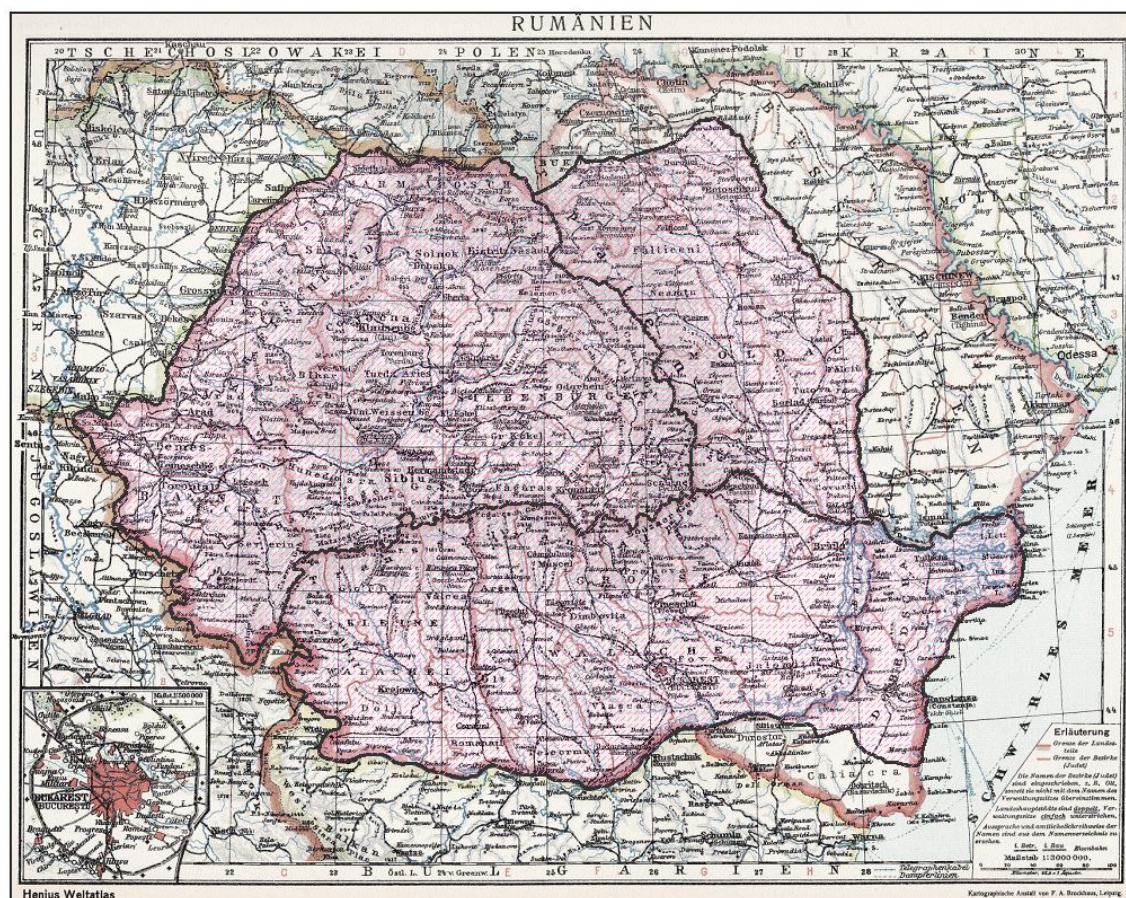


Figure 2. Modern day Romania (1945-), with the three regions outlined. Transylvania to the west, Moldova to the east and Wallachia to the south. The curvature of the Carpathians forms the backbone of the country, and the Danube Romania’s border with Bulgaria. The Black Sea in the south-east is the final geographic reference point. Adapted by the author from Map of Greater Romania, Heinus Atlas (Leipzig: Kartographische Anstalt von F.A. Brockhaus, 1926). See list of figures for complete reference.

It is also significant that Roman Dacia occupied approximately the same territory as the proto-Romanian states which succeeded it. Therefore, from their very incipience,

¹⁷⁵ Dutceac-Segesten (2011), p.122.

¹⁷⁶ H. Stahl, *Tarile Romanesti pana in preajma timpurilor moderne – doua prelegeri tinute ofiterilor scoalei speciale de geniu* [The Romanian States Until Around Modern Times – Two Lectures Held for the Officers of the Special School of Engineer Corps] (Bucharest: Cultura Neamului Romanesc, 1922), p.12.

Romanians establish a linguistic and ethno-genetic uniqueness, as well as a natural habitus, in other words a geographical space which becomes the cradle of this people. Radulescu-Motru, for instance, believed that, alongside ethnicity, “geographical surroundings”¹⁷⁷ also influenced the characteristics of a nation. Likewise, philosopher Lucian Blaga, one of the most celebrated Romanian philosophers, argued that the physical features of the territory reflected in the people’s spirit and even influenced their fate: “our unconscious soul is organically and inseparably solidary with this spatial horizon (...) which constitutes the framework for a particular destiny.”¹⁷⁸ In the Romanian imaginary, not uniquely of course, there is a powerful linkage between the geographical space and the people. Natural landmarks form the borders of the territory – as historian Djuvara argues, “our country is a large circle around the Transylvanian plateau,”¹⁷⁹ with the Carpathian Mountains as its backbone and the River Danube and Black Sea as its southern and eastern limits. For reference, see [Figure 2], the map of modern day Romania. Many have argued that this natural enclosure has not only marked the Romanian character, but also physically protected it, in its early days, from foreign interference, thus ensuring the unitary ethno-genesis of this people. As historian Florin Constantiniu points out, “there is a tendency (...) to consider the harmonious composition of the Carpathian-Danubian space as a gift offered by Providence or Nature to its later ‘worthy’ inhabitants – the Romanians – helping them confirm and affirm their unity.”¹⁸⁰ This is evident in Stahl’s earlier work, where he argues that “because of our geographical positioning we were not ethnically influenced by barbarians” and to it Romanians owe “their continuity as a people.”¹⁸¹

Additionally, tracing their origins back to Ancient Dacia and Rome offers Romanians historical antecedence within the region and even a certain pedigree of ancestry to which Slavic or Magyar groups may not lay claim. On top of demarcating them from peoples of Slavic or Hungarian descent who arrived on the continent during the

¹⁷⁷ Radulescu-Motru (1999), p.11.

¹⁷⁸ L. Blaga, *Trilogia Culturii [The Trilogy of Culture]* (Bucharest: Humanitas, 2011), p.164.

¹⁷⁹ N. Djuvara, *O Scurtă Istorie a Românilor Povestită Celor Tineri [A Short History of Romania Narrated to Our Young]* 12th Edition (Bucharest: Humanitas, 2010), p.11.

¹⁸⁰ F. Constantiniu, *O Istorie Sinceră A Poporului Român [An Honest History of the Romanian People]* 4th Edition (Bucharest: Univers Enciclopedic Gold, 2011), p.27.

¹⁸¹ Stahl (1922), p.11, p.9.

migration waves of the sixth century and onwards, this Daco-Roman link provides Romanians with anteriority in their territory and, consequently, a legitimacy in occupying it. As Milca continues his summary of the fundamental features of Romanian identity: “it certifies itself by invoking the principle of historical continuity in the Carpathian-Danubian-Pontic¹⁸² space.”¹⁸³ This forms the basis of Romania’s argument of historic ownership over Transylvania, the area of contention with Hungary.

Religion

The third foundation myth of the Romanian identity narrative is religion. For Romanians, belonging to the Eastern Christian faith is a pivotal aspect because it acts as a mechanism of both self-definition and demarcation from Others. Religion becomes part of the origins narrative, as proto-Romanians Christianise whilst still under or immediately after the Roman occupation of Dacia. As Djuvara argues, proof can be found in the Romanian language itself: “the testimony of language is the most powerful in establishing the ancientness of Christianity in Romania; all fundamental terms relating to religion are of Latin origin (...).”¹⁸⁴ More importantly, however, the narrative emphasises the fact that Orthodoxy was not imposed on Romanians, but developed naturally spreading across the population, even before the Church became an organised institution, exemplified here in Mihai Milca’s assertion: “before being embodied in the Church (...), Christian Orthodoxy was a popular, diffuse phenomenon.”¹⁸⁵ The notion of a grass-roots Christianity and its early beginnings implies, in effect, that religion forms part of the fabric of Romanianness – Romanians were born Christian and, as such, their cultural and identitary development is tightly linked to the adherence to and protection of Christian values. This link has been emphasised by Romanian historians across the ages, as Dutceac-Segesten points out: “the thesis of a popular Christianity or of the organic link between the definition of the ethnic groups and its religion was very popular among historians of 19th century, and

¹⁸² This the Romanian habitus, or the natural geographic space associated with the Romanian people. See [Figure 2]. All Romanian inhabited territories are contained within this imagined region.

¹⁸³ Milca (2010), p.27.

¹⁸⁴ Djuvara (2010), p.38.

¹⁸⁵ Milca (2010), p.66.

even before them, among the first authors of medieval chronicles.”¹⁸⁶ This is noticeable in Stahl, who argues that “the cement of the same religion in all Romanian speakers”¹⁸⁷ preserved the unity of the Romanian people. Religion, coupled with language, becomes a second identitary marker and feeds into the Self-Other narrative. This combination of Latinity and Orthodoxy is indeed unique, revealing Romanians as a ‘special’ ethnic group, delineating them not only from non-Christian groups, such as the Ottoman Empire, but also setting them apart from other Christian peoples – Dutceac-Segesten, for instance, suggests that “the thesis of popular Christianity is used as a sign of pride and primacy over other inhabitants of the region.”¹⁸⁸ The Hungarians, who converted to Christianity only in 1001, are a case in point – their late conversion places them in an inferior position vis-à-vis the Romanians, in another dimension of the narrative on legitimacy within the habitus. Orthodoxy places Romanians firmly within the Eastern European history and space and offers them a certain pedigree; journalist Pamfil Seicaru summarises this by arguing that “through Orthodoxy we hold the truth of the Eastern world.”¹⁸⁹

The Medieval Era and Early Modernity – The ‘Besieged Fortress’

In Romania, both the identity and historical narratives must reconcile two seemingly incongruous facts: whilst they seek to portray Romanians as unique and even superior from the perspective of their origins and cultural traits, it is nonetheless the case that their actual historical experience is less than illustrious. Not only were Romanians, for much of their history, separated in three provinces, but they were, by all accounts, developmental laggards, only “effectively entering the Middle Ages in the 14th century, when in the Occident they were coming to an end and the Renaissance was near.”¹⁹⁰ Even more significantly, this late entering into history meant that Romanians could not compete with the established regional powers, whether Poland, Hungary or the

¹⁸⁶ Dutceac-Segesten (2011), p.167.

¹⁸⁷ Stahl (1922), p.46.

¹⁸⁸ Dutceac-Segesten (2011), p.121.

¹⁸⁹ P. Seicaru, *Sensul traditiei in Dreptul la memorie [The Meaning of Tradition in the Right to Memory]* Volume IV (Bucharest: Dacia, 1993), p.172, reproduced in M. Milca, *Identitate Românească și Europeană [Romanian and European Identity]* (Bucharest: Virtual, 2010, p.71).

¹⁹⁰ L. Boia, *Romania, Tara de frontiera a Europei [Romania, Frontier State of Europe]*, 4th Edition (Bucharest: Humanitas, 2012), pp-61-62.

Ottoman Empire: “they could not— according to medieval hierarchy – be on equal footing with their neighbours.”¹⁹¹ The consequence is a Medieval period which for Romanians essentially consists of successive vassalage to and occupation by the foreign powers mentioned above. The narrative must mitigate this small-state condition and, essentially, justify Romanian exceptionalism in such modest conditions.

It achieves this by reinforcing the Self-Other contrast already articulated in the Foundation Myths and constructing certain recurring themes, most prominently of the Romanian provinces as Besieged Fortresses, victims of the expansionist tendencies of the Others, but which show a remarkable capacity of resistance under many guises, from military, to religious and cultural. As a result, the narrative reconciles the provinces’ historic failures by attributing them not to Romanians, but to their harassing Others, as Dutceac-Segesten points out: “the position of victim offers moral high ground from whence to pass judgement on the world, one’s neighbours, or one’s critics; so while it appears to be a position of weakness, it confers, in fact, a certain merit.”¹⁹² This tendency towards self-victimisation is evident from an early stage. The thread can be traced back to medieval times, when a Moldovan chronicler noted that his state was “in the path of malice.”¹⁹³ This theme, however, has been prevalent amongst modern writers also. Draghicescu noted: “our historic and social life (...) was estranged, dependent and limited by that of others. Our history was made by our neighbours, not as we would have wanted it, but as they wished it. We did not live our own life, but that of many others (...).”¹⁹⁴ Even as recently as 2011, historian Florin Constantiniu commented that “we were successively attacked, plundered, dominated, occupied, exploited.”¹⁹⁵ Romania’s history, particularly in the Medieval period, is essentially conflictual, and the destiny of its people is not in their own hands, but often at the mercy of the Other. In the sub-sections which follow, examining the experience of the three medieval provinces during the Middle Ages, it will be shown how the narrative reinforces the Self-Other contrast.

¹⁹¹ Boia (2012), p.62.

¹⁹² Dutceac-Segesten (2011), p.107.

¹⁹³ Grigore Ureche, cited in Constantiniu (2011), p.28.

¹⁹⁴ Drăghicescu (1995), p.355.

¹⁹⁵ Constantiniu (2011), p.29.

The Three Provinces

The three Romanian principalities came into being at different times in the context of the Hungarian domination over the region at the turn of the first millennium.

Transylvania was directly occupied and integrated in the Kingdom of Hungary by the end of the eleventh century, whilst Wallachia and Moldavia were created as a result of the aggregation of local feudal lords who built alliances in order to push back Hungarian armies crossing the Carpathian Mountains. The two provinces were officially established in 1330 and 1365, respectively, in the aftermath of military victories against the Magyar forces, becoming, as Constantiniu argues “irreversible political-territorial realities on the map of medieval Europe.”¹⁹⁶ There are, therefore, three regions which bring together the vast majority of Romanian speakers. They are not, however, equal in status. From the very beginning, Transylvania was part of the Hungarian Kingdom and its path and development was largely disassociated from that of Wallachia and Moldavia until the twentieth century. The other two are semi-independent small medieval states who will have to negotiate their geo-strategic position at the confluence of a number of regional powers – Poland, Hungary and, later, the Ottoman and Tsarist Empires. The historical narrative, although it treats Wallachia and Moldavia separately from Transylvania,¹⁹⁷ nonetheless follows the same pattern of interpretation, addressing the same themes in both cases, in order to create, perhaps, the sense of a shared experience, of communality between the three provinces, under different circumstances.

Transylvania – Hungary as the Essential Other

In Transylvania, the focus is on the contrast between the conquered Romanians, who form the majority of the population, and the ruling Hungarians who, although in the minority, suppress and persecute the autochthonous population throughout the thousand years they maintain control of the region. Oppression first takes on a religious dimension, with Hungary’s concerted attempts at the conversion of the

¹⁹⁶ Ibid. p.77.

¹⁹⁷ Iorga, Constantiniu, Djuvara, Boia, etc. assign separate subchapters to the development of Transylvania.

Orthodox Romanians to the Catholic faith, to the extent that, the narrative emphasises, it conditions access to the nobility class to affiliation to the Western Church.¹⁹⁸ The second facet of suppression is the institutionalised political exclusion of Romanians from the region's leadership structure, through a pact named *Unio Trium Nationum* (1437), regarding the distribution of power amongst the privileged nations of the Hungarians and their allies, the Saxons and the Szeklers. Romanians, most of whom had been relegated to the ranks of the peasantry by the Catholic condition, were considered a tolerated nation, and "were deprived of political rights and subject to discrimination by the privileged nations."¹⁹⁹ This *status quo* would largely hold until the unification with Romania in 1918, meaning that, for four hundred years Transylvanian Romanians were discriminated against and were, as Djuvara argued "a negligible quantity from a political perspective."²⁰⁰

This portrayal of the Romanians as the "main victims of a system of social oppression"²⁰¹ makes Transylvania the quintessential Besieged Fortress in the Romanian imaginary, as the population here is completely subjugated to its Hungarian conquerors, lacking both political rights and social standing. Draghicescu, for instance, argues that "the Hungarians have commanded us, as they do still in Transylvania and Banat, and have imposed on us their will and language."²⁰² To this he adds a short comment on a foreign observer's description of Transylvanian Romanians, telling of the Self-image which has developed as a result of this narrative: "they have slyness, the slave's weapon."²⁰³ This image of the enslavement of Transylvanian Romanians is a powerful and enduring one; Dutceac-Segesten points out that "the millennium long slavery"²⁰⁴ under the Hungarians is even referred to in modern history textbooks. Resentment over this state of affairs is noticeable in the narrative to this day: "in using the term 'Romanian state' for Transylvania one should not lose sight of this reality [of Romanians' exclusion from public life]: Romanians were autochthonous and in the

¹⁹⁸ Djuvara (2010), p.98; Constantiniu (2011), p.81.

¹⁹⁹ S. Fischer-Galati, *Twentieth Century Rumania* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1970), p.14.

²⁰⁰ Djuvara (2010), p.102.

²⁰¹ Iorga (1930), p.112.

²⁰² Draghicescu (1995), p.460.

²⁰³ de Gerando, cited in Draghicescu (1995), p.510.

²⁰⁴ Mihailescu *et al*, cited in Dutceac-Segesten (2011), p.225.

majority, but the political class was in its overwhelming majority Hungarian.”²⁰⁵ This interpretation of the situation of Transylvanian Romanians during the Middle Ages defines Romanians’ collective memory of and contemporary attitudes towards Hungary. Lucian Boia captures this accurately when he suggests that “extreme opinions reach mythical proportions and reach the intensity of a psychosis. Evidently, history bears its responsibility: the discrimination of Romanians and the contemptuous attitude towards them in Hungary before 1918 (...) cannot but have marked Romanian consciousness.”²⁰⁶

This is all the more the case as persecution was rooted in Romanians’ initial rejection of Hungary’s attempts to convert them to the Catholic faith. The resistance aspect, present here in a cultural form, completes the theme of Besieged Fortress. Romanians’ attachment to their religion has a double significance, as the original basis for discrimination but also as proof of the essential delineation between themselves and Hungarians. Milca emphasises this when he suggests that “Orthodoxy (...) was a form of identitary resistance against Hungarian attempts to catholicise Romanians.”²⁰⁷ Conversion is seen as conducive to assimilation into the Hungarian community²⁰⁸ and resistance to it, in a sense, entails the survival of the Romanian ethnic element in Transylvania. Draghicescu, for instance, argues that: “it must have been an extraordinary vitality which, with all the indignation of our history, kept us alive. Since the Christian law seems to have contributed to preserving us in Catholic Hungary (...), it was absorbing its conservation power from the energy of our people.”²⁰⁹ In 1930, the statesman and historian Nicolae Iorga, one of the artisans of the unification, implied that the rejection of the Catholic faith was paramount in Transylvanian Romanians’ preservation of their unique character: “the Romanian life of the villages from Ardeal²¹⁰ was not only maintained but was flourishing in terms of awareness of its nationhood” as the population there was “profoundly bound to its language, religion

²⁰⁵ Constantiniu (2011), p.82.

²⁰⁶ Boia (2011), p.278.

²⁰⁷ Milca (2010), pp.68-70.

²⁰⁸ Djuvara (2010) and Constantiniu (2011) both point that several later Transylvanian voevods descend from Catholicised and Magyarised Romanian noble lines.

²⁰⁹ Draghicescu (1995), p.358.

²¹⁰ The central region of Transylvania.

and traditions.”²¹¹ Conversely, for Romanians who had catholicised, this link had been lost: “there had existed a Romanian nobility [in Transylvania]. (...) But another religion, another social life, another political goal had won over their souls, which were, because of it, slowly transformed.”²¹²

In identitary terms, this is important because it cements the notion of an equality sign between Orthodoxy and Romanians. On the other hand, the essential social and political repercussions of this equation complete the tableau of Romanians as victims of the Hungarians. Ultimately, this interpretation of Transylvania’s history emphasises the price paid by Romanians for retaining their traditional values and gives this struggle an almost heroic dimension – survival bears the cost of domination by a foreign power. As Dutceac-Segesten points out, this narrative is pervasive: in a certain Romanian history text-book, Hungarians are portrayed as “responsible for the lack of official recognition of Orthodoxy, and therefore for the maltreatment of those who continue to embrace it despite difficulties. The suffering of the Orthodox faithful is placed in the heritage line of the early Christian missionaries.”²¹³ This portrayal of the Self is complemented by a representation of Hungary as an essential Other and responsible for the historic subjugation of Transylvanian Romanians. More importantly, presented in the context of the historical experience of the Romanian people, the drama of Transylvania is exported such that Hungary’s persecution of Transylvanian Romanians becomes an injustice levied against all Romanians; in other words, a national rather than regional issue. As a result, Boia argues, Romanians have constructed a myth around Hungary’s influence on the existence and affairs of their state, ascribing to it the role of “dominant piece to which are subordinated all major Romanian evolutions.”²¹⁴ Dutceac-Segesten picks up on this myth building exercise. In her review of Romanian history textbooks, she finds that, most often, “Hungarians are portrayed only as enemies, as counterweights to the Romanian action. They do not appear to possess specific features, other than an incessant desire to oppose the

²¹¹ Iorga (1930), pp.110-111.

²¹² Ibid., p.112.

²¹³ Dutceac-Segesten (2011), p.167.

²¹⁴ Boia (2011), p.279.

Romanian cause (...).”²¹⁵ Consequently, Hungarians occupy a specific and critical place in the Romanian imaginary, at the heart of all efforts to create, unite and protect the Romanian territories.

Wallachia and Moldavia

In Wallachia and Moldavia, the historical narrative follows similar patterns of interpretation, despite the difference in status between them and Transylvania. The two principalities were, in effect, established political and administrative entities, but their small-state condition meant that they could not achieve independence. In the two centuries that followed their creation, Wallachia was “at times (...) a vassal of Hungary, or a vassal to the Ottomans (for the first time in 1390), or a semi-independent state (...)”²¹⁶ whilst Moldavia switched from being a vassal of Hungary to swearing allegiance to the Polish crown in what has been described as a “struggle for political emancipation (...) by the voevods of Wallachia and Moldova.”²¹⁷ With the rise of the Ottoman Empire in the fifteenth century the balance of power in Southern and Eastern Europe changed and the two states became permanent vassals to the Porte, Wallachia in 1476 and Moldavia in 1512, suzerainty which lasted until the nineteenth century. The medieval experience of the two states, therefore, is one primarily of subservience to foreign powers which is obviously at odds with the prerogative of self-preservation and of rejection of external influences that appears so prominently throughout the narrative. Again, the theme of the Besieged Fortress aims to vindicate this state of affairs and, similarly to the case of Transylvania, the focus is on both the victimisation of the Romanian peoples and resistance, which here takes the guise of ensuring the survival and autonomy of the states.

Draghicescu highlights “the intrigues and intervention of the Turks, Hungarians and Poles in the internal affairs of the sister countries” as well as the “humiliations and defeats suffered”²¹⁸ by the Romanian people. Radulescu-Motru also talks about “the

²¹⁵ Dutceac-Segesten (2011), p.224.

²¹⁶ P.R. Magocsi, *Historical Atlas of Central Europe* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2002), p.30.

²¹⁷ Fischer-Galati (1970), p.10.

²¹⁸ Draghicescu (1995), p.297.

wicked circumstances our people have endured.”²¹⁹ Contemporary historian Constantiniu believes that the Romanian states were exploited because of their inherent geo-political significance, on the path of all continental “expansions and invasions.”²²⁰ The picture created is one of Romanians as helpless targets of expansionist larger powers. Under such circumstances, independence is not an option and the destiny of these states can only be one of submission. This type of narrative is evidence of what Dutceac-Segesten argues is Romania’s “tradition of placing [itself] in an inferior position vis-à-vis their more powerful neighbours and thus justify[ing] the lack of power or dominance by placing the blame elsewhere.”²²¹

Showing, however, Romanians’ relative weakness is not enough. In order to complete the Besieged Fortress tableau a narrative of resistance is required. For this, the focus shifts on portraying Romanians’ benevolent acceptance of suzerainty as a guarantee of the survival of the states which protects the Romanian ethnic element. As Boia argues, the Romanian narrative emphasises the “remarkable vitality of the Romanian regions, which succeeded, in difficult conditions (...), to protect their existence, whilst once powerful states, such as Hungary or Poland (...), collapsed, swallowed by even greater powers.”²²² Mihai Milca goes as far as to suggest that this, in fact, was the *raison d’être* of the principalities: “a minimum strategy of survival of the Romanian element required accommodating to circumstances and the temporary compromise with superior forces, crushing from a military, demographic, etc. perspective.”²²³

Romanians cannot hope to achieve independence, but self-preservation is attainable; therefore, accepting vassalage is not cowardly but a defensible, perhaps even ingenious, measure of ensuring the survival of the Romanian element. In identity terms, this narrative is significant, because it reinforces the portrayal of Romanians as resolute in retaining their statehood in a historical context which is against them, as well as revealing them as special in how they negotiate the difficult circumstances they are facing.

²¹⁹ Radulescu-Motru (1999), p.45.

²²⁰ Constantiniu (2011), pp.28-29.

²²¹ Dutceac-Segesten (2011), p.107.

²²² Boia (2012), p.62.

²²³ Milca (2010), p.70.

With this, the theme of Besieged Fortress is complete. In both Transylvania on the one hand, and Wallachia and Moldavia on the other, the picture created by the historical narrative is one of conflict and oppression by greater powers. Romanians are victims of history but manage to retain their fledgling identity by various means, and often at great cost. The differentiation between Self and Other is a thread that runs throughout and leads to a perception that, although physically separated, Romanians nonetheless share a desire to protect the values that would later define the uniqueness of their character, whether religious attachment or autonomy within the habitus. In the modern era, these ideas would all be harnessed when a new theme emerges – that of unity and independence.

The Modern Era – the Theme of Unity

The Birth of Romanian National Identity – Unity

Unity is the linchpin of the Romanian identity narrative, to which all Self and Other regarding features explored so far are subordinated – Dutceac-Segesten, for instance, considers it to be “one of the major pillars of in the construction of national Romanian identity and a dominant myth.”²²⁴ The emergence of this theme in the Romanian regions is unsurprisingly tightly linked to the nationalist trend which swept Europe in the eighteenth and nineteenth century, as Lucian Boia argues: “the theme could not but tempt Romanians. A nation which was late in achieving unity, (...) Romanians felt the need to define the elements of this unity, the traits which made them similar to one another and different from others.”²²⁵ To this end, the Foundation Myths as well as the Besieged Fortress theme were utilised to prove the spiritual unity of the Romanians and, ultimately, legitimise the creation of a single state bringing together all Romanian speakers. These now sedimented claims about Romanian identity were, therefore, from the very beginning a political tool. The connection between this unity-driven sense of identity and the troubled history of the Romanian regions was also paramount. Intellectuals based their arguments for unification on the cultural communalities of all Romanians and the existence of a *de facto* Romanian nation, but

²²⁴ Dutceac-Segesten (2011), p.171.

²²⁵ Ibid., p.238.

also used the victimhood narrative to portray the creation of a nation-state as vindication for Romanians' history of oppression and interference by foreign powers.

The modern historical narrative highlights both the political efforts to achieve the unification of the regions, and also the process of development of these ideas. For instance, the fact that the first attestation of Romanian nationhood in an official context came from Transylvania in the form of a petition for political rights for Romanian Transylvanians (*Supplex Libellus Valacharom Transsilvaniae*, 1791) is of particular significance for two reasons. Firstly, the appeal was based on the preponderance of the Romanian ethnic element in the region, but also on its anteriority compared to the ruling Hungarians²²⁶ an argument in tune with the Origins and Habitat myths. Romanians could trace their existence within Transylvania to Antiquity and this defined their historical right in occupying it, whilst, at the same time, entitling them to political recognition. As such, Constantiniu argues, the *Supplex* "was the expression of the remarkable progress in the crystallisation of Romanian nationalist ideology."²²⁷ Secondly, it proves that the emancipation movement begins in Transylvania and from here it is "funnelled into Walachia and Moldavia"²²⁸ throughout the nineteenth century. This is crucial to the identity narrative as it means that the awareness of national belonging of Transylvanian Romanians is not stymied by their suppression under Hungarian rule, but, to the contrary, triggered by it. The attestation of nationhood becomes, in this vein, a modern manifestation of resistance to foreign rule in the Besieged Fortress of Transylvania. As this theme is carried across the Carpathians into Wallachia and Moldavia, the identitary discourse places Transylvania at the heart of the endeavour to bring together the Romanian nation.

It was not long before these notions began to gather traction in the other two Romanian regions and it is here that they become arguments for the establishment of a nation-state. A particularly interesting book, published in the communist period (1982), a compendium of works and correspondence by Romanian leaders and intellectuals, effectively tracks the evolution of the discourse on unity in the first half

²²⁶ See Milca (2010), Constantiniu (2011), Djuvara (2010).

²²⁷ Constantiniu (2011), p.190.

²²⁸ Ibid., p.15.

of the nineteenth century. By the 1830s Romanian administrators were pointing out that “the difference between the world’s peoples are first according to religion, language and proximity – and secondly, according to traditions and the nature of the administration – neither one of these can be found between Wallachians and Moldavians.”²²⁹ There is a recognition, therefore, that the similarities between the peoples in the two principalities are based on both their common origins, but also their similar historical experiences. By the Pan-European revolution of 1848, the discourse had crystallised around the identification of these factors as the constitutive elements of a Romanian nation encompassing not only Wallachia and Moldavia, but the other Romanian inhabited regions as well. Revolutionaries like Nicolae Balcescu were arguing that “our aim, gentlemen, I believe cannot be other than the National Unity of Romanians. A unity first of feeling, to bring with it political Unity, to make Wallachians, Moldavians, Bessarabians,²³⁰ Transylvanians (...), one body politic, one nation, one state.”²³¹ The framing of his argument, however, highlights the manner in which the medieval victimhood narrative has fed into the unity discourse: “these Romanian states that have existed for eighteen centuries, this nation (...) which has escaped unscathed from the terror of the Middle Ages when so many enemies more powerful than it threatened to conquer it (...) how could it be destined to disappear now (...) in the century of liberty.”²³² Unity and independence were deserved, therefore, precisely because the history of the Romanian regions had hitherto been one of hardship and endurance.

²²⁹ Conachi, cited in G. Kirileanu, ‘Ideea Unirii la marele logofat C. Conachi [The Idea of Unification in Logothete C. Conachi],’ *Convorbiri Literare*, XLIII:1 (1909), pp. 55-59, in C. Bodea, *1848 la Romani – o Istorie in Date si Marturii [1848 for Romanians – a History in Dates and Testimonies]* (Bucharest: Editura Stiintifica si Enciclopedica, 1982), p.80.

²³⁰ By this point Moldavia has already been partitioned in the Western Moldavia, the semi-independent state and Bessarabia, controlled by the Tsarist Empire (1812).

²³¹ N. Balcescu, ‘Privire asupra starii de fata, asupra trecutului si viitorului patriei noastre [An Overview of the Current Situation, over the Past and Future of Our Nation],’ *Opere vol.I*, G. Zane and E. Zane (eds) (Bucharest: Editura Academiei Romane, 1974), pp. 171-178, in C. Bodea, *1848 la Romani – o Istorie in Date si Marturii [1848 for Romanians – a History in Dates and Testimonies]* (Bucharest: Editura Stiintifica si Enciclopedica, 1982), pp.319-320.

²³² *Ibid.*, p.318.



Figure 3. The Old Kingdom (1859-1918). Resulted from the unification of Western Moldavia, in blue, and Wallachia, in pink. Adapted by the author from 'Map of Greater Romania,' Heinus Atlas (Leipzig: Kartographische Anstalt von F.A. Brockhaus 1926). See list of figure for complete reference.

Both these goals were eventually achieved, although in stages. In 1859 came the unification of Wallachia and Moldavia in the first state of Romania, also known as the Old Kingdom – see [Figure 3]. Independence from the Ottoman Empire was attained in 1878 and Transylvania and Bessarabia joined the other two regions after the First World War, in 1918 – see [Figure 4]. This final stage is the culmination of the Romanian national project and, as such, one of the most celebrated events of its history – it is no coincidence that the date of the de facto unification, 1 December, is Romania's national day. The completion of the habitus and the establishment of an independent state bringing together all Romanian speakers is the benchmark of the Romanian identity narrative and a vindication of a historical experience marked by foreign domination. Contemporaneous statesman and historian Iorga frames this best when he asserts that “in this Carpathian-Danubian Orient [exists] a people of about 14.000.000 souls, with an ancient original civilisation which does not ask, in exchange for its millenary suffering (...), for anything more than respect of its incontestable

destiny”²³³ to be brought together in a single state. Revealing political unity as the special destiny of all Romanians places the nation-state at the centre of the identity narrative; the state was seen as the physical manifestation of the existence of Romanians as a people and, as such, its creation signified the rightful ‘coming into being’ of the Romanian nation, against the vicissitudes of history. This perception of the establishment of a nation-state as just deserts is pervasive. Noted jurist George Sofronie, active in the first half of the twentieth century, argued in 1942 that “for the national consciousness (...) of Romanians everywhere, the decision taken on 1 December 1918 (...) has, above all else, the significance of a just sentence in a long historical process.”²³⁴

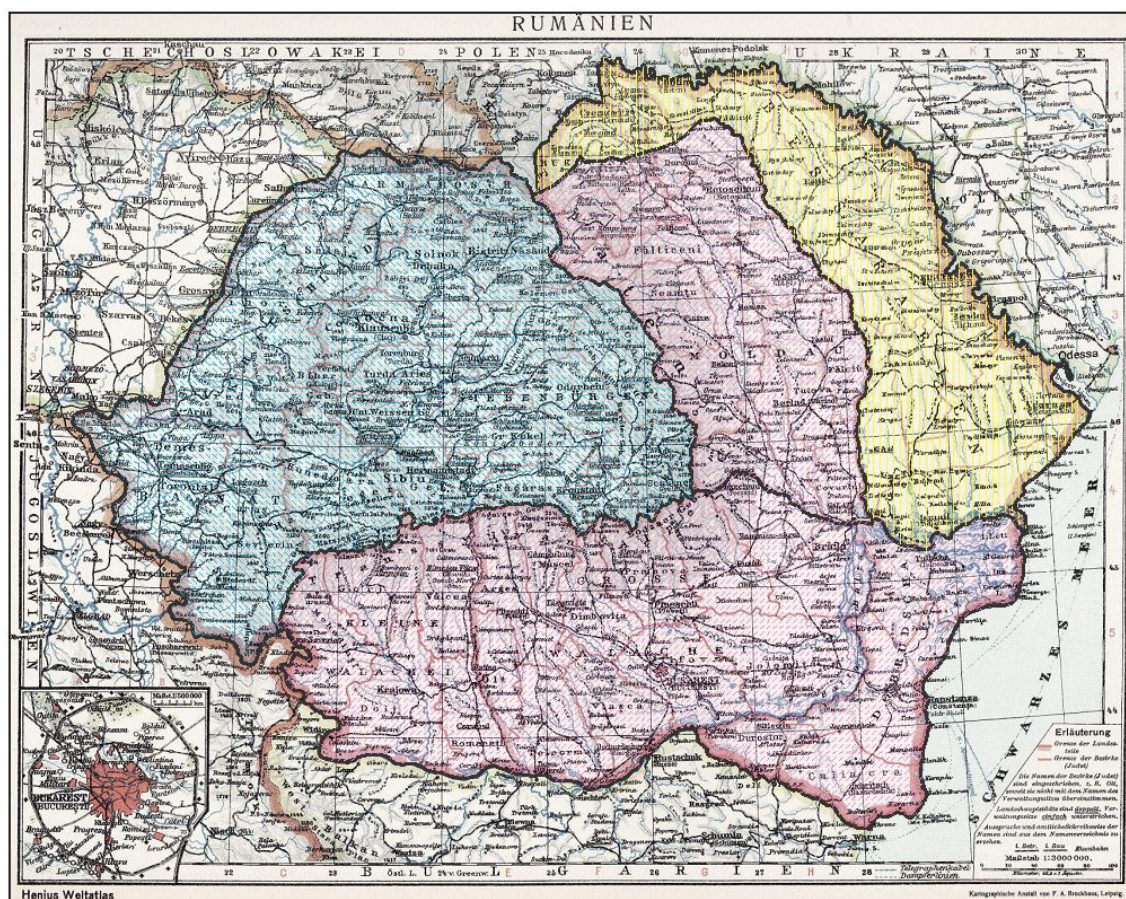


Figure 4. Greater Romania (1918-1940). Resulted from the unification of the Old Kingdom, in pink; Bessarabia, in yellow; and Transylvania, in blue. Adapted by the author from ‘Map of Greater Romania,’

²³³ N. Iorga, *Istoria Romanilor si a Civilizatiei Lor* [The History of Romanians and Their Civilisation] (Bucharest: Editura Fundatiei Ferdinand I, 1930), p.281.

²³⁴ G. Sofronie, ‘Semnificatia juridico-istorica a Actului de la Alba-Iulia [The Juridical and Historical Significance of the Alba-Iulia Act],’ in G. Ivascu, and A. Tanasescu (eds.), *Cumpăna Cuvântului 1939-1945* [The Sweep of the Word 1939-1945] (Bucharest: Eminescu, 1977), p.329.

Heinus Atlas (Leipzig: Kartographische Anstalt von F.A. Brockhaus 1926). See list of figures for complete reference.

Even in the contemporary narrative, both the Foundation Myths and Besieged Fortress theme are used in framing this achievement. Djuvara, for instance, calls the Great Unification “miraculous (...) [and] the fulfilment of Romanians’ centuries old dream to come together from Banat [A/N region in the West of the country] to the Dniester River.”²³⁵ One notices here an emphasis on the organic habitus limited by natural landmarks and a linking between political and geographical completeness. Milca, on the other hand, argues that “Romanian identity metamorphosed, after periods of humiliation and oppression by the great powers, knew, after 1918 (...) an era of patriotic exaltation and national jubilation. (...) Romanians enjoyed a feeling of realisation of a collective aspiration refused for centuries on end (...).”²³⁶ There is a certain sense here that Romania in effect defeats history, achieving unification despite its eternal ill-wishers and thus its success is an individual endeavour, outlining once again the resilience and determination of its people. It is therefore the case that, whilst the theme of Unity is dominant, the discourse on its legitimacy incorporates the major aspects of the foundation and medieval themes, to the point at which they become constitutive elements of it.

²³⁵ N. Djuvara (2010), p.236.

²³⁶ Milca (2010), p.86.

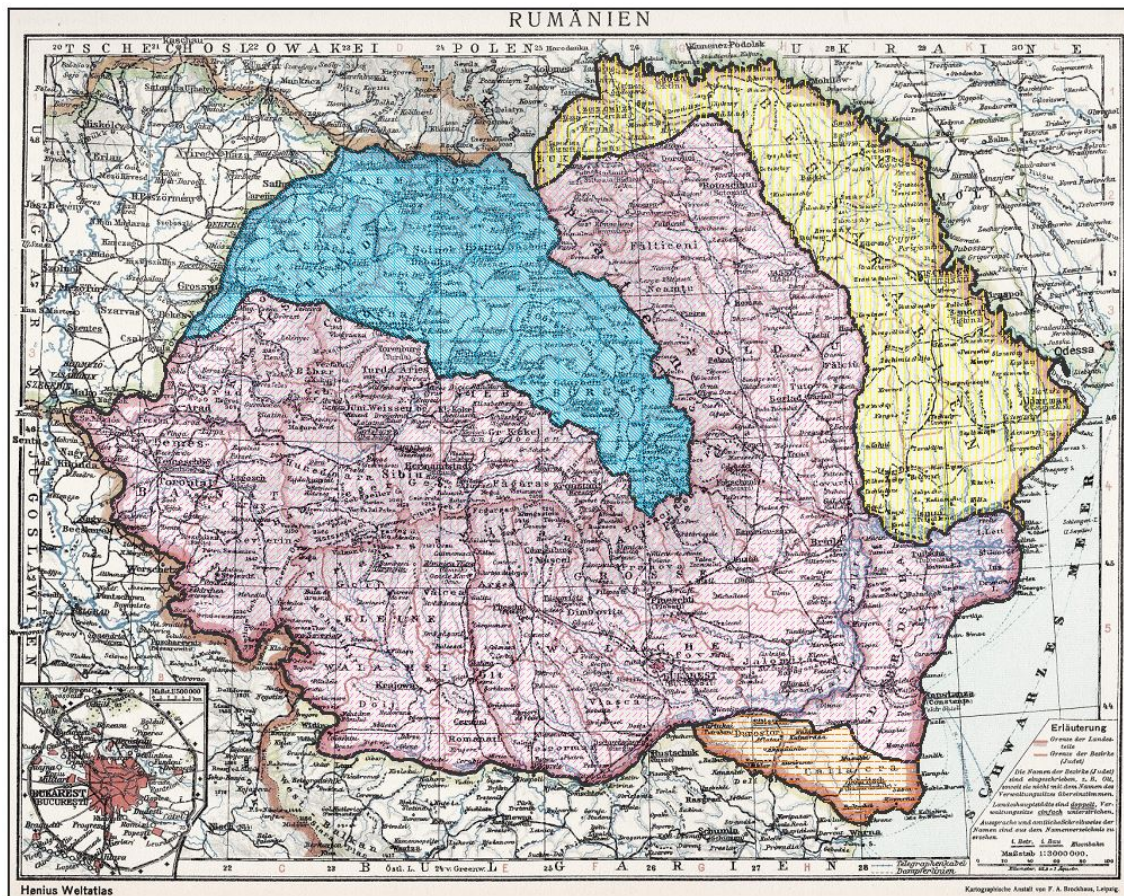


Figure 5. Territorial Losses of 1940. In yellow, Bessarabia, ceded to the Soviet Union; in blue, North-Western Transylvania, ceded to Hungary; in orange, the Cadrilater region, ceded to Bulgaria. Adapted by the author from 'Map of Greater Romania,' Heinus Atlas (Leipzig: Kartographische Anstalt von F.A. Brockhaus 1926). See list of figure for complete reference.

Although the unification of the three Romanian principalities is now almost a hundred years old, the theme of Unity still represents 'a major pillar' of the Romanian identity narrative. As Lucian Boia has argued, "in Romanian culture, the myth of unity, or of uniformity, is so entrenched" that it affects even specialists, "historians or sociologists."²³⁷ There are, of course, complex reasons why that is the case, not least the influence of communism on the identity narrative which will be discussed in the following section. This thesis argues, however, that an important aspect which one should take into account is that, in the Romanian perception, this unity today is neither *complete* or *uncontested*, giving the theme contemporary salience. As a result, national unity continues to play a crucial part in the Romanian imaginary, with the

²³⁷ Boia (2010), p.235.

focus now shifting from the creation to the protection of the Romanian state. In this, two particular actors play a critical role because of their perceived interests and interference in the affairs of the new state – Hungary and Russia, – becoming effectively subscribed in the theme of Unity as essentially threatening Others.

It has already been shown how Hungary's conquering of Transylvania and its treatment of the indigenous Romanian population has been portrayed in the historical and identity narrative, building Hungary into an essential enemy of Romanians' efforts for emancipation. Transylvania was eventually annexed by the Old Kingdom after the First World War resolving a situation which Djuvara argued, "weighed heavily on the Romanian heart."²³⁸ That is because, without Transylvania the national project remained incomplete, as Draghicescu's assertion exemplifies: "our history, our map, is unfinished and still awaits the fulfilment of its real and natural contours."²³⁹ These identity scars would perhaps have healed, had the issue of ownership of Transylvania been settled at the time. However, Hungary did not renounce its claim over Transylvania and, given the opportunity in 1940, it annexed part of it under sanction from Germany – see [Figure 5]. Although the territory was eventually returned to Romania at the end of the Second World War, the fact that Hungary challenged Romania's right of possessing Transylvania definitively confirmed the interpretation of this actor as an existential threat to its people and, from now on, its territorial integrity. A contemporaneous account reveals the impact of Hungarian aggression on the Romanian imaginary: "we did not believe, no-one could ever have imagined that the righteousness of Romania, whilst so evident, would ever be questioned again."²⁴⁰ Building on the already existing tensions between Romania and Hungary, the denial of the 'righteousness' of the contours of the Romanian state, based on historical rights, is the event which conclusively situates Hungary as an antagonistic force in the Romanian identity discourse, ascribing to it, as Boia and Dutceac-Segesten have argued, a dominant malignant role in the nation's evolution.²⁴¹

²³⁸ Djuvara (2010), p.230.

²³⁹ Draghicescu (1995), p.447.

²⁴⁰ L. Rebreanu, 'Transilvania 1940 [Transylvania 1940],' *Familia [The Family]* 76, series IV:1 (January 1941), pp.8-10, in G. Ivascu, and A. Tanasescu (eds.), *Cumpăna Cuvântului 1939-1945 [The Sweep of the Word 1939-1945]* (Bucharest: Eminescu, 1977), p.207.

²⁴¹ Boia (2011), p.279, Dutceac-Segesten (2011), p.224.

The perception that their territory continues to be contested and is still a Besieged Fortress causes in Romanians an inherent suspicion and distrust of Hungary's actions, whilst, on the other hand, in identity terms reinforces the importance of affirming and protecting their unity. This is ultimately at the root of contemporary attitudes towards Hungary, not least due to Budapest's continued interest in the affairs of its minority in Transylvania.

In this view, the *raison d'être* of the Romanian state becomes the protection of their habitus and people from external interference. The actions of the second Other do nothing if not exacerbate this tendency. Russia enters the scene much later than Hungary, but its influence on Romanian history and identity is portrayed to be just as if not even more powerful than Hungary's. Part of the reason is that Tsarist Russia's expansion into Eastern Europe, primarily through the centuries-long Russo-Turkish Wars, coincides with the articulation of the Romanian national project – at a time when national unity becomes their main political goal, Russia's interference in the affairs of Moldavia and Wallachia intensifies. As Lucian Boia argues, the consequence is that Russians are seen “with suspicions, even hostility, as a potential threat to the Romanian nation.”²⁴² The threat materialises most prominently in the case of Bessarabia, originally the eastern part of Moldavia. The region is annexed by Russia in 1812²⁴³ beginning what Djuvara termed “the tragedy of Bessarabia.”²⁴⁴ Despite unifying with Romania in 1918 after the disintegration of the Tsarist Empire, Bessarabia is reclaimed by Russia in 1940 and lost for good after the end of the Second World War, when it becomes a Soviet republic – see [Figure 5]. The partition of Moldavia and its forced separation from the Romanian state as a direct result of Russian interference has had a profound impact on the Romanian identity narrative in both the articulation of the Self, and Russia as an Other.

In what concerns the Self, the sheer existence of Bessarabia – now the Republic of Moldova – another territory inhabited by Romanians, means that the national project

²⁴² Boia (2012), p.80.

²⁴³ In [Figure 3] one notices that, by the time of the 1859 unification, Bessarabia was separate from Moldavia, p.79.

²⁴⁴ Djuvara (2010), p.172.

remains incomplete – the goal of national unity and, as a corollary, the protection of the state’s integrity have been failed. What makes the event even more significant is the fact that, for Romanians, Bessarabia is not a contested territory: as Boia argues, “over [it] Romanians had an incontestable historical right – it had been stolen from Moldavia in 1812.”²⁴⁵ A great injustice, therefore, has been inflicted on the Romanian people which, coupled with the reality that Greater Romania was an ephemeral project (all in all, Bessarabia was part of Romania for only 25 years) makes its loss the great tragedy of Romanian modern history. On the other hand, the author of this wrongdoing is Russia, yet another great power enforcing its will on the Romanian people, confirming its small state condition and putting an end to the dream of a “Greater Romania from the Dniester [i.e. the eastern border of Moldova] to the Tisza [the western border of Transylvania].”²⁴⁶ The theme of Besieged Fortress reprised, Russia replaces the Others of the past – Poland, Austro-Hungary, the Ottomans – as the essential threatening super power, with the Romanians victims of their expansionism. As Marin argues, Russians become forever subscribed in the victimhood narrative: “(...) it is them who are responsible of the ‘unfortunate destiny’ of the Romanians.”²⁴⁷ This notion may seem surprising, taking into account the fifty years that followed the loss of Bessarabia, which saw Romania’s move into the Soviet Union’s sphere of influence during the Cold War. However, as will be shown in the next section, although the response to the event was muted at the time, Ceausescu’s national socialism soon brought this simmering resentment to the fore and defined, to a large extent, Romania’s contemporary attitude towards Russia. The consequence of the event overall is that there is an indelible link, in the Romanian imaginary, between Russia and the unravelling of Romanian unity.

The Communist Period

Ceausescu and the Weaponising of Romanian National Identity

So far it has been shown how the Romanian identity narrative, which emerges in earnest during the nineteenth century, has national unity and the nation-state at its

²⁴⁵ Boia (2012), p.94.

²⁴⁶ Boia (2011), p.216.

²⁴⁷ Marin cited in Dutceac-Segesten (2011), p.218.

heart, and is deeply rooted in the telling of its people's history, particularly its origins and medieval experiences. The Self-Other contrast is one of the primary markers of this narrative, a fact which is not in itself unique. However, the manner in which it was utilised in the communist period, especially during Ceausescu's regime, makes it crucial in understanding Romanians' contemporary anxieties and sensitivities in regards to the role of the state and its relations with both Russia and Hungary as Others, and the Republic of Moldova, as an Estranged Self.

Romanian communism is, in itself, an odd entity. Before the Second World War it would have been unthinkable that the Communist Party could ever rise to power in this state. As Boia has argued, it was perceived as a "foreigner's party, betrayer of national interests (...). The reality is it played to Moscow's tune, proclaiming the multinational character of the Romanian state and nations' right to self-determination (in other words, the breaking up of Romania and, most importantly, the recovery of Bessarabia by the Russians)."²⁴⁸ As a result, it went against the primary prerogatives of the Romanian state, the protection of its unity and even its national character. Add to this the drama of the loss of Bessarabia, Romania's adoption of communism as state ideology could, therefore, not have been the people's choice; as Romanian historians have endeavoured to point out, it was, instead, imposed by Moscow.²⁴⁹ Since both communist ideology and the closeness to Russia its adoption entailed were incompatible with the precepts of the Romanian identity narrative, their enforcement would, over time, cement the image of Russia as a malignant interfering force in the affairs of the Romanian state. In the short term, there was nonetheless an attempt by the pro-Moscow Communist Party to pursue a re-alignment of the Romanian identity and historical narratives to this new course. Boia argues that, during the 1950s the Soviet model had to "impregnate Romanians' minds. The only historic and cultural reference point remained Russia. (...) History was rewritten." If before the emphasis had been on the national idea, "now the accent shifted to (...) integration in the Slav space, in particular 'brotherly' relations with Russia and the Soviet Union."²⁵⁰ The

²⁴⁸ Boia (2012), p.105.

²⁴⁹ See Boia (2011), Constantiniu (2011), Djuvara (2010).

²⁵⁰ Boia (2012), pp.117-118.

population's and, soon after, elites' reaction to this, however, was one in tune with Romanian attitude towards foreign influence in general, namely resistance; not political, but cultural. Attempts at Russification, for instance, failed comprehensively, as Boia points out: "even (...) when Russian was intensely studied, too few actually learnt it. Many only 'pretended': it was a sign of non-adherence, a passive form of resistance. (...) Even less did the Romanians learn to love the Russians. Not even Romanian communists loved them."²⁵¹

Additionally, what followed was an endeavour to break away from Russian communism and, whilst not renouncing the ideology altogether, fashioning it into something compatible with the dominant portrayal of the Romanian Self. As Dutceac-Segesten states, this was achieved by creating "the Romanian 'socialist nation,' a combination of nationalism and Marxism."²⁵² Although the trend began in the late 1950s under the leadership of Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej, it is Nicolae Ceausescu's administration which exemplifies these efforts most prominently. His regime combined, and thus legitimised, personal rule with the main precepts of the Romanian identity narrative, cloaked in a destructive form of nationalism. As Cinopoes has pointed out "the cult of personality went hand in hand with the nationalist direction Ceausescu adopted soon after coming to power."²⁵³ Ceausescu effectively took the constitutive themes of the narrative and altered them in such a way as to portray the uniqueness of the Romanian character and the differentiation from Others as a proud national destiny and their protection as the main responsibility of the state. As a result, constructing an unquestionable link between his regime and Romania's glorious past of resisting foreign interference was crucial, with certain attempts, such as the building of a "totem-like sculpture with Ceausescu's head at the top of a column of Romanian princes,"²⁵⁴ which may today seem bizarre, if not entirely farcical. Despite its questionable methods, the aims of Romanian communism were to subscribe Ceausescu to the long list of 'historical defenders of the nation' and, through this,

²⁵¹ Ibid. p.225.

²⁵² Dutceac-Segesten (2011), p.21.

²⁵³ R. Cinopoes, *Nationalism and Identity in Romania: A History of Extreme Politics from the Birth of the State to EU Accession* (London: Tauris, 2010), p.74.

²⁵⁴ Dutceac-Segesten (2011) p.22.

create him into a powerful figure committed to ensuring the continuity and strengthening of the Romanian nation.

The pursuit of this new direction entailed a lift on the strict censorship on nationalist literature of the 1950s and the re-publishing and creation of new works on Romanian identity. The Foundation Myths (with the notable exception of religion) and Unity theme take centre stage, in a policy that mythologises Romanian history and identity. Ceausescu himself rather crudely seeks to capture the psychological profile of Romanians by drawing on the characteristics of their ancestors, the Dacians and Romans: “from the Dacians [the Romanian takes] his thirst for freedom, the will to never bow his head to foreign oppressors, the determination to be true to himself, the only master of his fate,” whilst from the Romans he derives his “rational spirit, judgment and passion for creation.”²⁵⁵ A re-iteration, therefore, of the notion of Romanians as synthesis of two equally noble and ancient lines, the influence of which is still visible in their character. The habitus and its significance in defining and protecting the Romanian people is of equal importance as descriptions such as this exemplify:

Our Dacia, the most precisely contoured, the most solidly and organically constructed geographic space [of the Balkans] (...), has slowly kneaded and revealed, while detaching it with its own physiognomy from the rest, a particular people – the Romanian people. There is, indeed, no other history or people to represent such clear expressions of their land, as are the Romanian people and their history.²⁵⁶

Geography and history are interconnected, the combination of the two providing the auspicious circumstances for the unique development of the Romanian nation. In terms of implications for the Romanian identity narrative, this emphasis on geography is meant to instil in the mind of the people a sense of pride in the individuality of their nation and

²⁵⁵ Ceausescu, cited in Boia (2011), p.245.

²⁵⁶ I. Conea, ‘Spatiul geografic romanesc [The Romanian Geographical Space],’ *Revista Fundatiilor Regale* [The Royal Foundations Magazine] IX:7 (1 July 1942), pp.38-47, in G. Ivascu, and A. Tanasescu (eds.), *Cumpăna Cuvântului 1939-1945 [The Sweep of the Word 1939-1945]* (Bucharest: Eminescu, 1977), p.301.

the overall conviction that the Romanian territory forms an organic and indivisible part of their nation.

From this theme to national unity and the nation-state there is but one step and for the Romanian communist regime, it is particularly important. As Dutceac-Segesten points out, the emphasis on “cultural unity based on a shared descent justifies the formation of a ‘national unitary state’ including all Romanian speakers. This is presented as the most ardent desire of the people and a constant preoccupation of their leaders.”²⁵⁷ In effect, Ceausescu’s regime re-imagined Romanian history as a constant endeavour to achieve political unity, the reality being, as has been shown, that this process begins only in the nineteenth century. Lucian Boia argues that “*unity*, alongside *continuity*, became the directing axis of the historical discourse.”²⁵⁸ Through this, he continues, the regime portrayed unity as a “specific trait of the Romanian being.”²⁵⁹ It is telling of this rhetoric that the period saw the publishing of works such as the compendium on the unity discourse of the nineteenth century (Bodea, 1982) or another anthology of essays and articles from the Second World War (Ivascu and Tanasescu, 1977) which features reactions to the occupation of Transylvania prominently alongside press releases by the Communist Party.

The Others in Ceausescu’s Romania

Endeavours such as these are meant not only to ensure that the past, distorted as it is, remains vivid in the collective memory of the people, but also, inadvertently, that the image of the threatening Others is perpetuated. In this, the communist agency has been particularly successful, not in changing the main tenets of the Romanian identity narrative, but in buttressing them and augmenting the Self-Other contrast. By emphasising both the uniqueness of Romanians and their desire for unity, as well as the disruptive interference of the Others, this version of the narrative ensures that the past is never forgotten and old trespasses never forgiven. As such, in what concerns both Russia and Hungary, their image as existential threats to the Romanian state is

²⁵⁷ Dutceac-Segesten (2011), p.171.

²⁵⁸ Boia (2011), p.229.

²⁵⁹ Ibid.

exacerbated. In the first instance, the break from Moscow is owed as much to Romania's resentment towards Russia as to Ceausescu's desire to hold sole dominion over the state. The two are effectively related – Ceausescu connected his own desire for independence²⁶⁰ from the Soviet Union to the existing popular animosity towards Moscow. The breakup of Greater Romania and the manner in which the remainder of the state had been treated by the Soviets after the Second World War had cemented in the Romanian imaginary the notion that Russia was an inherent threat, and not a friend, to their people. As Boia argues, "the assault of communism on Romanian culture and society was of extraordinary brutality."²⁶¹ Although under communist rule, Romania had been considered a losing party of the war and ordered to pay heavy reparations to the Soviet Union.²⁶² Added to this, it remained under Soviet occupation from the end of the war until 1958. Altogether, these infringements on Romania's sovereignty, notwithstanding the dissolution of its unity, contributed to what Boia has argued were significant anti-Russian "national sentiments of the population."²⁶³

Under these circumstances, independence from Moscow was as much Ceausescu's personal as it was a popular desire. As a result, when, in August 1968, he publically condemned the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia, he did so "in front of a crowd who was solidary with him and ready to defend their country if Soviet tanks were to cross the Romanian border."²⁶⁴ Ceausescu pursued a "policy of autonomy in the Warsaw Pact"²⁶⁵ and closeness to the West which fitted neatly on top of, but also fuelled, the popular demand for distance from Moscow. On the other hand, the narrative of independence within the Soviet sphere could not but have touched upon the sensitive issue of the loss Bessarabia. During the Ceausescu regime, the state's position towards the matter was re-evaluated: if in a history textbook of the 1950s the annexation of eastern Moldova was referred to as a liberation,²⁶⁶ later the state pursued a "policy of

²⁶⁰ Constantiniu (2011), p.498.

²⁶¹ Boia (2012), p.108.

²⁶² Constantiniu (2011), p.435.

²⁶³ Boia (2012), p.120.

²⁶⁴ Constantiniu (2011), p.500.

²⁶⁵ Ibid., p.509.

²⁶⁶ M. Roller, *Istoria R.P.R. – Manual pentru Invatamantul Mediu [The History of the P.P.R. – Manual for Secondary Education]* (Bucharest: Editura de Stat Didactica si Pedagogica, 1952), p.632.

supporting historians who were critical of the Soviet official position. They never directly attacked the Soviet position, but throughout the Ceausescu period, historians argued that Moldova was a Romanian territory.”²⁶⁷ One should not be surprised, therefore, that the issue of Bessarabia maintained its salience throughout the communist period.

On the other hand, relations with Hungary during the communist period were in many ways defined by their affiliation to the Eastern Bloc. Within Romania, however, resentment against Hungarians was ripe not least because of the regime’s efforts to keep the memory of the threat to Transylvania and the historical subjugation of its Romanian contingent alive. Roles, however, had now become somewhat reversed; after hundreds of years of Transylvanian Romanians being subjects to the Hungarian crown, their state now contained a not insignificant Hungarian minority (around 7% of the total population), ‘inherited’ from the annexation of Transylvania. With this in mind, Ceausescu’s regime and the type of nationalism it pursued, were, as Cinopoes argues, “marked in a particular ethnic way.”²⁶⁸ Through emphasising cultural uniqueness, national unity and political independence from Moscow, Ceausescu had glorified and mythologised the exceptionalism of the Romanian people and their state. In such circumstances, the Hungarian minority stuck out as spoilers of the unitary nation-state and became the target of a concerted policy of discrimination and forced assimilation. According to Gillberg, this included the limiting of “educational opportunities [in the mother tongue, presumably]; place names [being] changed to reflect Romanian heritage while removing (...) [foreign] influence; officials allegedly chang[ing] birth certificates to reduce the number of ethnic (...) Magyars born in Romania.”²⁶⁹

The result was, undoubtedly, the one intended – Romania is now more ethnically homogenous, with the percentage of internal Others significantly lower than at its

²⁶⁷ S.D. Roper, *Romania: The Unfinished Revolution* (Florence, KY: Gordon & Breach Publishing, 2000), p.126.

²⁶⁸ Cinopoes (2010), p.4.

²⁶⁹ T. Gilberg, *Nationalism and Communism in Romania – The Rise and Fall of Ceausescu’s Personal Dictatorship* (Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 1990), p.177.

creation.²⁷⁰ More importantly, however, the emphasis on the Self-Other contrast in rhetoric coupled with the discrimination of minority groups in practice, has perpetuated the perception that Hungarians who have not been assimilated cannot be true Romanians: “how could you say a Hungarian is Romanian? (...) The Hungarian is Hungarian!”²⁷¹ Ultimately this type of thinking has led to an isolation of the Hungarian community from Romanians – a ‘back-to back’ existence, as an interview respondent puts it²⁷² - and the construction in the Romanian identity discourse of an Other from within. Importantly, this has a significant impact on how Romanians view the role of the state in negotiating its position vis-à-vis the Hungarian minority, as well as the latter’s demands for cultural and political recognition. The perception, as will be explored in the following chapter is, to this day, that the interplay between the state and the Hungarian minority is a zero-sum-game and acquiescence to any of their demands comes contrary to the prerogatives of a national state, and even threatens its existence because of both the real and imagined link between the Hungarian minority and its kin state.

Conclusion – Structure, Agency and Romanian Identity

This chapter has shown how the historical narrative has been constructed in such a way as to highlight the main features of Romanianness and to emphasise an identity narrative fitted to the political goals of the era, namely the creation and protection of a Romanian nation-state. This concurs with Browning’s view that the historical narrative shows the “contingency of dominant representations”²⁷³ of the Self and Other. Neither this nor, perhaps, the three themes of the Romanian identity narrative are unique to Romanians. What is, however, peculiar is the continuation of these themes into the contemporary narrative, in that the portrayal of both the formative events of the Romanian people as well as the representation of the Self and Other

²⁷⁰ According to Boia (2012, p.144) even in Transylvania the percentage of Hungarians had gone down from 24.4% in 1930 to 21% in 1992, whilst the proportion of Romanians had increased from 57.8% to 73.6% in the same period.

²⁷¹ Boia (2012), p.213.

²⁷² Anonymous D., *Interview with Former Minister of Culture*, by I. Tartacuta-Lawrence, 12.06.2014, tape, Bucharest, Romania.

²⁷³ Browning (2008), p.64.

have remained largely unchanged from the beginning of the twentieth century and up to this day. Although circumstances and perceptions over the actions of Others played their part, the role of agency, and particularly that of Ceausescu's regime, has been paramount in ensuring continuity. In Ceausescu's interaction with the Romanian identity narrative, the impact of agency over structure appears most emphatically, following up on the assumptions made in Chapters 1 and 2. His role, as it turned out, was not in re-interpreting the image of the Self and Others, but augmenting the already existing portrayals. There was, therefore, an alteration of the identity narrative during his regime, but it manifested through the reinforcement of its original features. The reason why Ceausescu's approach was successful where early pro-Moscow communists had failed is that the latter's was too drastic a departure from the original tenets of the narrative – closeness to Russia and silence on the loss of Bessarabia were simply untenable positions for Romanians. Ceausescu, however, had the ability to alter the narrative in the manner he did because the version of Romanianness pursued had traction at societal level. Independence from Moscow and the mythologizing of Romanian uniqueness were attractive propositions, as was raising Unity to the status of national doctrine. As such, Ceausescu worked within the bounds of the original version of the narrative, but acted to intensify the Self-Other contrast. Ceausescu's regime is therefore responsible for the continuation and, at the same time, exacerbation of the main features of the identity narrative, as several generations of Romanians became socialised in this new *hyper* variant.

Appraising the legacy of Romanian communism is not an easy task. Its impact on the state's economic situation or industry is more visible than its effects on Romanian mentality, which are of interest here. The regime ended in a rejection of Ceausescu, but the version of the Romanian narrative of identity he perpetuated was not as readily jettisoned as the regime itself. As will be explored in the following chapter, the end of the Cold War offered another opportunity for the re-evaluation of its main tenets and the setting of new foreign policy goals. However, as shown by the contemporary historical narrative, portrayals of the Self and Others remain largely unmodified. The next section will examine both the reasons behind and consequences of this continuity.

Table 2. Major Events of Romanian Contemporary History and of Relationship with Three Others

1989 (December)	A popular revolt sees the capture and execution of Nicolae Ceausescu. The communist regime ends in Romania
1990	Iliescu and FSN win Romania's first democratic elections.
1991	Iliescu signs treaty with the Soviet Union, nullified by the latter's dissolution, six months later. The Republic of Moldova proclaims its independence. Unification with Romania seems imminent
1992	A short civil war breaks out in Moldova. Transnistria, supported by Russian troops, defeats the Moldovan army and becomes a secessionist region. Unification talks take a back seat. Iliescu is re-elected. Romania begins negotiations with Russia on a Basic Treaty
1994	Under pressure from the international community, Romania and Hungary begin negotiating a Principal Treaty. Romania signs NATO's Partnership for Peace.
1995	Romania tenders its application to the European Union. Negotiations with Hungary break down
1996	Romania refuses to sign Treaty with Russia. Iliescu loses elections. Romania and Hungary sign the Principal Treaty; relations begin to recover.
1998	Viktor Orban's is elected in his first term as prime-minister.
1999	Hungary accedes to NATO. Romania begins negotiations for accession to EU.
2000	Accession negotiations to the EU begin.
2001	The Party of Communists win power in Moldova. Relations between Bucharest and Chisinau are affected.
2002	Status Law passed in Hungary. Relations between Romania and Hungary suffer.
2003	Romania and Russia sign Basic Treaty.
2004	Romania joins NATO. Hungary accedes to the European Union.
2007	Romania becomes a member of the European Union alongside Bulgaria
2009	Romania offers citizenship and European passports to Moldavians of Romanian descent. Pro-European factions win power in Moldova.
2010	Viktor Orban returns to power in Hungary. A period of tension between Bucharest and Budapest begins. The Dual Citizenship Law is passed by Hungary.
2014	Russia annexes Crimea and war breaks out in Eastern Ukraine. Romania reacts by lobbying for increased NATO presence in the Black Sea region and strengthening its ties with the Republic of Moldova. Elections in Hungary - Jobbik runs campaign in Romania, Orban is re-elected.

2015	Orban publishes photos of Hungarian secessionist region in Transylvania on Facebook, prompting aggressive response from Bucharest.
2016	Romania assumes greater NATO responsibilities in the region. The anti-ballistic missile shield on the Deveselu base becomes operational. Pro-Russian Igor Dodon wins presidential elections in the Republic of Moldova.

Chapter 4. Continuity Rather than Change – Romania's National Identity in the Transition Era

Introduction

This chapter examines the manner in which the Romanian identity narrative has developed after the revolution of 1989 and how it has fed into the state's international and domestic behaviour during the transition period. Firstly, the variant in play at the time of the revolution is examined, with a focus on the particular implications the portrayal of Self had on views regarding the role and prerogatives of the state. Following on from this, the events of 1989 and its aftermath are briefly recounted and the chapter proceeds to outline the manner in which Ion Iliescu and his party, the FSN, made use of the identity narrative in order to secure victory in the 1990 elections. A subsequent section analyses how the Iliescu regime re-conceptualised Romanian identity in such a way as to buttress the narrative's major features, but remove its communist component. The argument is made that the agency of the Iliescu regime in interacting with the structure of the narrative is crucial in understanding the variant in play in Romania today. Finally, the chapter discusses the manner in which the identity narrative influenced Romania's foreign policy and domestic agendas. On the international front, the prerogative of ensuring the security of the state drawing on the theme of Besieged Fortress resulted in a unanimous desire to join the Western community. As such, the main foreign policy goals articulated in the transition era are accession to the EU and NATO. Romania's behaviour towards achieving these objectives is, however, ambiguous, showing a divergence between rhetoric and international behaviour, on the one hand, and commitment towards domestic reform, on the other. The chapter examines the roots of the Iliescu regime's anxiety towards change in the period of 1990-1996 and how this affected the integration process with regards to internal reform and the minority question. Finally, the chapter concludes by arguing that it is only when this attitude changes, after 1996, that Romania's domestic behaviour begins to match up to its international commitments, and the goal of accession becomes the predominant motivation behind state action.

Romania in 1989

After nearly half a century of communism, the winter of 1989 saw the fall of the Ceausescu regime. The revolution in Romania followed similar uprisings in Poland, Hungary, East Germany, and Czechoslovakia,²⁷⁴ and resulted in the total disintegration of the Eastern Bloc. In order to understand the nature and repercussions of Romania's anti-communist revolution, which stands out amongst the rest through its brutality, but also, arguably, its lack of success in cleansing the political class of elements pertaining to the former regime, one must set the discussion in the context of 1989 Romania.

The previous chapter explored how Ceausescu's regime had acted to create a hyper version of the Romanian national identity narrative, in which uniqueness, unity and the link to a glorious past were emphasised. The legitimacy of the Romanian Communist Party rested on its capacity to protect these values, which became sedimented in the mentality of a population subjected to its propaganda. As Lucian Boia has argued, "the dominant, in a sense even singular, discourse was, during Ceausescu's time, the nationalist discourse."²⁷⁵ Whilst building on the existing features of the Romanian identity narrative, Ceausescu had instilled in his people a perception of the exceptionalism of this nation; the personality cult which ascribed to him alone the special role of defending its interests went hand-in-hand with this portrayal. Overall, as Boia continues "the taking over and amplifying of the national mythology of the nineteenth century, distorted as it was, conferred onto the regime credibility and legitimacy, and to the dictator an aura of patriotism."²⁷⁶ Ceausescu was successful in entrenching these aspects but also giving the identity narrative a specific focus. Romanian identity is primarily inward looking; Romanians are concerned with the preservation of their uniqueness and, in this, the state plays a critical role. The state is an instrument for the protection of the Romanian character, and the prerogatives which flow from it – defence of its independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity.

²⁷⁴ P. Cipkowski, *Revolution in Eastern Europe* (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1991), p.120.

²⁷⁵ Boia (2011), p.140.

²⁷⁶ Ibid., p.141.

Ceausescu's regime was particularly apt at imparting this view, and at achieving these goals – independence from Moscow and the isolation of the Hungarian minority were not only rational courses of actions but part of the state's duties. This perception of Romanian exceptionalism and the role of the state as its guardian are one of the most lasting legacies of communism and impacted the nature of Romania's transition to liberal democracy, influencing to this day portrayals of the Self and, necessarily, of Others.

If on this front Ceausescu proved efficacious, he was less successful in managing the socio-political and economic spheres. One of the aspects which set Romania apart from other Eastern bloc states is the rejection of Gorbachev's policies of Perestroika and Glasnost which elsewhere meant a process of de-Stalinisation with significant liberalisation and economic reform, culminating in the development of civil societies.²⁷⁷ Ceausescu rejected the reforms proposed by Moscow, according to historian Florin Constantiniu, for two reasons: "the refusal to reintegrate what seemed to him to be a new 'bloc discipline,'" and "his conservative dogmatic vision, opposed to structural changes."²⁷⁸ In other words, Ceausescu was a hard-liner, who employed a quintessentially individual type of rule and did not suffer the involvement of Moscow in his country's domestic affairs. Consequently, with the media remaining censored and the development of civil opposition movements, such as Solidarity in Poland, prohibited, Romania stood out amongst socialist regimes as "one of the most illiberal and repressive."²⁷⁹ On the other hand, the living standards of the Romanian population under a deteriorating economic situation and unpalatable level of involvement of the political in all areas of public life²⁸⁰ had become unbearable – Djuvara goes as far as arguing that the communist regime "spoiled our soul."²⁸¹

In such circumstances, identity-based discourse was no longer sufficient in maintaining the legitimacy of the regime. As Boia points out, the policy worked "until Romanians

²⁷⁷ Cinopoes (2010), p.74-75.

²⁷⁸ Constantiniu (2011), pp.520-521.

²⁷⁹ C. Chen, 'The Roots of Illiberal Nationalism in Romania: A Historical Institutional Analysis of Leninist Legacy,' *East European Politics and Societies* 17:2 (2003), p.194.

²⁸⁰ Cipkowski (1991), p.125.

²⁸¹ N. Djuvara (2010), p.262.

began to suffer of hunger and cold. The glorious shadows of the past could not avert neither the economic disaster, nor the explosion of social tensions.”²⁸² The context of 1989 was one in which the Romanian population was despondent and unrepresented, with no opposition structure, political or civil, around which to coalesce. As former minister Anonymous D, argues, the profile of Romanian communism was such that “it did not provide any niche for liberty as in Poland and Hungary, in which the single party had no interlocutor with whom to negotiate its historic exit, its exiting the scene.”²⁸³ The consequence was a violent uprising, which claimed over 1.100 victims,²⁸⁴ including, ultimately, the ruling couple – Elena and Nicolae Ceausescu – who were executed by squadron after a sham trial²⁸⁵ on Christmas day in 1989. Romanian communism finished in bloodshed and represents a defining moment in the state’s history. The revolution paved the way for Romania to reform its ties with the Western community and embark on a transition from socialism to liberal democracy and capitalism. That is not to say, however, that the communist legacy was readily shed. As Boia points out, “the historic mythology accumulated in [Ceausescu’s] era survived the dictator. Psychological constellations have a longer life than material structures.”²⁸⁶ That is all the more the case as the communist infrastructure was not altogether disassembled, as the following section will explore.

Romania in Early Transition – Ion Iliescu and the Use of Identity as Electoral Tool

The lack of a functioning and pro-active civil society, on the one hand, and of a political opposition, on the other, had significant repercussions on the nature of the power struggle which followed the revolution. In effect, the vacuum left by the fall of the Ceausescu regime could not be filled by anyone other than lower tier Communist Party officials. The general confusion surrounding the revolution did nothing if not facilitate this process: the figure heads who had made their way to the national broadcaster building after Ceausescu’s flight, such as future president Ion Iliescu, became

²⁸² Boia (2011), p.141.

²⁸³ Anonymous D (2014).

²⁸⁴ Constantiniu (2011), p.534.

²⁸⁵ Ibid., pp.532-533.

²⁸⁶ Boia (2011), p.141.

associated with the uprising despite their known ties with the former regime.²⁸⁷ In other words, as Stan and Zaharia summarise, “the revolution resulted in elite reproduction, not elite replacement”²⁸⁸ – in 1989 Romania did not achieve a break from its communist past, but a reshuffling of its leadership. The manner in which the political class negotiated its communist links was to divert attention from them by eliminating all traces of the Party. As Boia points out, “it was a stroke of genius to dissolve the party (...). Suddenly, communism ceased to exist, and no-one was communist, because they could not be. A former dignitary in Ceausescu’s regime was just as non-communist as a former political prisoner.”²⁸⁹

Its replacement was an all-encompassing political body called the Front for National Salvation (FSN), which was predominantly composed of “second-echelon Communist Party officials, communist directors of state-owned enterprises, and Securitate secret agents”²⁹⁰ and led by Ion Iliescu, whose regime was providing the interim state-leadership. By the time of Romania’s first democratic presidential and parliamentary elections, in 1990, several ‘historical’ parties, which had dominated Romanian politics in the inter-war period but were abolished in the early days of the communist regime, had been resurrected. These were the National Liberal Party (PNL) and the National Peasants’ Party, which had added Christian Democrat to their title (PNTCD). Their leaders, Radu Campeanu and Corneliu Coposu, and many other members, were communist dissidents who had been either imprisoned or forced into exile, often both, by the former regime. If one had assumed that the opposition stood a chance of curbing Iliescu’s rise to power, they would have been disappointed with the result of the election. As Cipkowski points out, “Ion Iliescu was elected president with a landslide of 80% of the vote. (...) The 16 million electorate, which turned out in its entirety, knew that he and his aids in the Front had been Communists who worked for Ceausescu.”²⁹¹ The Liberal and Peasants’ candidates received a meagre ten and four

²⁸⁷ Cipkowski (1991), p.144.

²⁸⁸ L. Stan and R. Zaharia, ‘Romania,’ in D. O Beachain, V. Sheridan and S. Stan (eds), *Life in Post-Communist Eastern Europe after EU Membership – Happy Ever After?* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2012), p.186.

²⁸⁹ Boia (2012), p.148.

²⁹⁰ Stan and Zaharia (2012), p.186.

²⁹¹ Cipkowski (1991), p.144.

percent of the votes, respectively, whilst in the parliamentary election, the FSN secured two thirds of seats with only six and two-and-a-half percent for the historical parties.²⁹²

It may seem peculiar that after a bloody revolution the first democratic mandate in post-socialist Romania was overwhelmingly offered to refashioned communists, as they controlled both the legislature and the executive branches. The reasons behind this electoral result are worth examining as they rest on both the circumstances of the suffrage but also on the manner in which Iliescu and his party framed their political discourse. On the first point, traditional accounts stress the fact that the FSN came into the elections with significant capital, as they were governing a state which in communism, and still at this point, controlled everything. An infrastructure was in place which allowed them to disseminate their message and, more importantly, alter the public's perceptions of their opposition. As Cinopoes argues, "an important factor that helped FSN to strengthen its grip on power was the fact that the Front gained control over various state facilities, especially the press, the radio and television in the early days of the revolution."²⁹³ Additionally, Romanians at the time were vulnerable to these machinations. Having been "brutalised, poorly educated (...) and starved of information about the real world,"²⁹⁴ they were inherently susceptible to the propaganda of the ruling party. The fact that the FSN acted in the fashion of the former regime, effectively arresting the state apparatus and using a tactic of disinformation and denigration, does not, however, capture the entire story. The identitary perspective employed here offers an additional explanation for Iliescu's success, by focusing on the role played by the discourse on identity in legitimising the Iliescu regime and ensuring its election.

The chapter has already explored the version of the Romanian national identity narrative in play at the point of the revolution. It was one which drew heavily on the Unity and Foundation themes, built on notions of a strong connection to the past and an inherent exceptionalism of the Romanian nation. The continuity and augmentation

²⁹² Boia (2012), p.152.

²⁹³ Cinopoes (2010), p.80.

²⁹⁴ Cipkowski (1991), p.145.

of an identity narrative focused on these elements, however, means that Romanians were naturally resistant to change and suspicious of the unknown in equal measure to foreign interference. Despite the events of the revolution, these perceptions did not disappear. However, the brutality of the overthrow of communism meant that “Romanian identity was wounded and anxious.”²⁹⁵ These circumstances not only made the FSN the obvious choice, but also gave Iliescu’s party the opportunity to utilise anxieties towards an uncertain future to its advantage. The post-revolutionary climate was one of general confusion in which certain rumours began to spread, most famously over the actions of foreign (particularly Russian) ‘terrorists’ who were said to be attempting to capture the state apparatus.²⁹⁶ Whether these foreign elements were indeed active during and immediately after the revolution, or whether they were entirely imagined threats – perhaps even deliberate diversions – is open to contention.²⁹⁷

In any case, the image being portrayed was one of Romania as a Besieged Fortress – outside forces were threatening the success of the revolution or the state’s overall independence, or even both. The resurrection of the theme is not surprising, as ensuring the security of the state and its population is a crucial prerogative set by the Romanian identity narrative, and one of the major remits of government which, at the time, was non-existent. As a result, the potential existence of foreign terrorists fuelled a sense of fear and insecurity amongst the general population and a desire for an interim government to emerge expeditiously. It should come as no surprise, then, that familiar figures such as Iliescu were not dismissed because of their association with Ceausescu, but, to the contrary, were welcomed as recognised elements of the establishment, and, therefore, *not foreign ‘terrorists.’* Framed within the Besieged Fortress, the unknown was a much more frightening perspective for Romanians than the ‘evil’ they were accustomed to. As a result, the FSN’s rise to power must be set in the context of the anxieties which dominated public life at the time of the revolution – the priorities set by the Romanian identity narrative which draw on the theme of the

²⁹⁵ Milca (2010), p.97.

²⁹⁶ Constantiniu (2011), p.533.

²⁹⁷ See Boia (2012), p.147.

Besieged Fortress necessitated immediate action towards the establishment of a climate of security. In this vein, the FSN were not only party to the liberation of the people, communists though they were, but the only available option in resolving the perceived security crisis.

On the other hand, the precepts of the Romanian national identity narrative also shaped the FSN's discourse and the manner in which it portrayed itself and its opposition. Beyond their efficient utilisation of the printed and broadcast media, reformed communists built their arguments around elements which resonated with the Romanian audience. The revolution was seen, conforming to the theme of Unity and Besieged Fortress, as a historical victory, a shared endeavour of the people and a struggle for freedom which came at a great human sacrifice. The similarities between it and the Great Unification of 1918 were apparent. Even in contemporary times, the association is not uncommon – in 2002, MP Ion Solcanu argued during a Parliamentary Debate that “an arch over time, linking the Great Unification of 1 December 1918 and the Popular Revolution of 1989 (...), leads us to think that the glorious pages of tradition and fight for freedom must be carried on by the young generation.”²⁹⁸ The FSN had a legitimate reason to affiliate themselves with this endeavour, as they had been part of it; more importantly, they had the opportunity to highlight the reality that their opposition, many of whom had been in exile, had not. The FSN could portray its opposition as unrepresentative of the Romanian people and, rather unjustly, unsympathetic towards their suffering: “‘while we were suffering under Ceausescu, they had coffee and croissants in Paris’ was one popular slogan.”²⁹⁹ What Iliescu and FSN were attempting, ultimately successfully, was an othering of their opponents. The argument was that only those who had felt the hardship of communism and had fought to overturn it could lead Romania onto its new path, because they knew what Romanians needed. As journalist Ion Cristoiu argued in 1990:

²⁹⁸ I. Solcanu in Parliament of Romania, *Dezbateri Parlamentara - Sedinta solemnă comuna a Camerei Deputatilor si Senatului din 28 noiembrie 2002* [Parliamentary Debate - The Solemn Plenary Session of the Chamber of Deputies and Senate of 28 November 2002], 28.11.2002, available from <http://www.cdep.ro/pls/steno/steno.stenograma?ids=5372&prn=1> date of posting unknown, [accessed 30 April 2015].

²⁹⁹ J.G. Pilon, *The Bloody Flag – Post-Communist Nationalism in Eastern Europe, Spotlight on Romania* (New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers, 1992), p.66.

This massively important vote was the consequence of an emotional state rather than a profound analysis (...). In opting for Mr. Iliescu what mattered was the fact that the other two candidates had not lived through the difficult realities of Ceausescu's regime alongside the Romanian people.³⁰⁰

Whilst this type of discourse may seem needlessly inflammatory, it reflected public opinion. Although their electoral pledge of instating a Western-type democracy in Romania certainly had its appeal, the message of these candidates was too far removed from the interests of the general population and their style too heavy with foreign influences: "the vast majority of the population was genuinely terrified of the prospect of a bow-tie wearing president with an occidental discourse [referring to Ion Ratiu]."³⁰¹ Suspicion regarding the motives of these candidates and their ability to serve the Romanian nation in its state at the time hinted at the fact that the public preferred incremental rather than radical change. From this perspective, Iliescu's arguably populist, but certainly national identity-focused, message, whose campaign posters carried the slogan "A President for Romanian Rebirth,"³⁰² proved much more successful. In effect, by playing the nationalist card and othering his opponents, Iliescu used to his advantage the anxieties and priorities created by the Romanian identity narrative. The argument was that his was a party which understood the trauma of the revolution, protected Romanian values, and would pursue a direction in both its domestic and international agenda which conformed to them.

These considerations show that identity-related factors played a significant role in the establishment and legitimisation of the political elite after 1989. What is revealed is, on the one hand, a reformed class of communists who adopted similar tactics to the previous regime in securing and maintaining power and understood the public's anxieties, but also a population which responded to and shared the concerns raised

³⁰⁰ I. Cristoiu, 'Un Vot Ingrijorator pentru Frontul Salvării Naționale [A Worrying Vote for the National Salvation Front],' *Zig-Zag Magazin* 27.05.1990, available from <http://www.nasul.tv/editorial-ion-cristoiu-din-anii-90-despre-victoria-zdrobitoare-fsn-alegeri/> posted on 10.12.2012, (author of posting unknown) [accessed 30 April 2015].

³⁰¹ M. Voinea, 'Documentar – Istoria alegerilor prezidențiale. 1990, Ion Iliescu și pacaleala democrației originale [Documentary – The History of Presidential Elections. 1990, Iliescu and The Farce of Original Democracy],' *Politica*, 22.10.2014, available from http://adevarul.ro/news/politica/documentar-istoria-alegerilor-prezidentiale-1990-ion-iliescu-pacaleala-democrației-originale-1_544685c80d133766a81eb935/index.html [accessed 30 April 2015].

³⁰² Ibid.

over the suitability of their opposition to provide the leadership the state needed. In a sense, the overarching attitude of both the political elites and society was one of resistance to change and a desire to pursue a direction of transition in keeping with what Romanians perceived as familiar – a focus on solidarity and, to the extent it was attainable, continuity. It is the contention of this thesis that this perspective offers a more accurate picture as to why Iliescu and FSN were successful in the early struggle for power, rather than the most traditional assessment that the socialists' state capture alone accounts for this victory.

Romania's Contemporary Identity Narrative – Continuity Once More

This project has argued that one of the hallmarks of the Romanian identity narrative is continuity along its major features. The previous chapter explored the reasons behind this consistency and ascribed to the Ceausescu regime a particular role in the process. Ceausescu's interaction with the structure of the narrative had been one of building on previous portrayals whilst exacerbating the contrast between Self and Other, creating the hyper version which was in play at the time of the revolution. However, the uprising and the overthrow of communism offered the opportune circumstances and even the necessity for a reevaluation of its major aspects. This was the type of situation when, as discussed in the theoretical background chapter, amendments to the narrative structure were not only possible, but required. What is clear, despite this, is that contemporary representations of both the identity and historical narrative match those of earlier periods – see, for instance the similarities between Draghicescu's work (1907) and the assessments of Constantiniu (2011), Milca (2010) or Djuvara (2010)³⁰³ – whilst the communist-inspired aspects are notable through their absence. In a sense, one notices a return to the pre-communist narrative, which vindicates Schifirnet's argument that "a XIX century Romanian is not entirely different from the XXI century Romanian" and that "identity becomes a constant of the Romanian national character."³⁰⁴ Accounting for the continuity of the narrative

³⁰³ Chapter 3, which deals with the reproduction of the Romanian historical and identity narrative presents a number of instances where there exists significant alignment between modern and contemporary sources.

³⁰⁴ Schifirnet (2009), p.474.

requires an examination of the role of Iliescu's regime and its own interaction with this structure.

Early transition governments, and Iliescu's in particular (1990-1996), had a significant challenge in repairing the wounds created by communism and the revolution. Firstly, Ceausescu's hyper variant was no longer fit for purpose, not least of all because of the links it had constructed between Romanian identity and the personality of a now vilified leader. Secondly, the downfall of Ceausescu's regime brought about significant social, economic and political changes. Questions regarding the nature of Romanian identity beyond the influence of communism, as well as Romania's place in a 'new' Europe had to be answered, for, as Milca had pointed out, the public's attitude was one of general anxiety.³⁰⁵ Iliescu was faced with a conundrum. As a former communist, he was aware of how powerful a tool discourse on identity was in legitimising and strengthening an administration – indeed, he had employed it successfully during the 1990 election. However, he could not utilise the same devices as Ceausescu had, as that type of rhetoric could never appeal to a revolutionary generation. Instead, one would suggest that Iliescu had two choices: he could remodel the identity narrative with a focus on the 'return to Europe,' in effect moving Romania on from the long-established inward looking exceptionalism which had been the building-block of the narrative hitherto; or he could continue in the same tradition but downplay, or remove, communism's contribution to Romanian history and identity. Iliescu chose the latter of the two. Lucian Boia notices in the official discourse the

Persistence of profound isolationist tendencies beyond the apparent embracing of European values. Reconstructing the past in a manner which amplifies autochthonic factors to the detriment of European dynamics and influence continues to be practised.³⁰⁶

The argument of this project is that, in what concerns Romania's portrayal of the Self and its Others, this choice is vital. Iliescu pursued a re-evaluation of tenets of the Romanian identity narrative which abstracted communism from the country's history

³⁰⁵ Milca (2010), p.97.

³⁰⁶ Boia (2011), p.371.

and “fix[ed] the attention of citizens onto a longer time-frame.”³⁰⁷ The focus remained on Romania’s great historical achievements in the fight for unity and independence: the anniversary of the creation of Great Romania in 1918, 1 December, became the national day, whilst the 24 January, the anniversary of the unification of Wallachia and Moldova in 1859, became a cause for public celebration and military parades. The pre-unification struggle in Transylvania was marked in 1991 through a visit by president Iliescu to Cluj to commemorate the signing of the *Supplex Libellus Valachorum*, the significance of which was explored in the previous chapter. The leaders instrumental in the realisation of these goals were also recognised, for instance the artisan of 24 January, Prince A.I. Cuza was fashioned into “the emblematic official figure of the constitution of modern Romania.”³⁰⁸ Gallagher’s assessment of the Iliescu’s regime on this issue is that “it quickly seems to have grasped that if it proved able to redefine the past in ways that suited its own political agenda, this could strengthen its legitimacy.”³⁰⁹

Beyond state sponsored manifestations and celebrations such as the ones mentioned above, this direction was also pursued by means of the education system, and especially through the history curriculum. As the telling of history in a particular manner is one of the main instruments for the socialisation of the identity narrative, it offers an avenue for identifying the claims about Romanian identity the state wished to reproduce or reconstruct. As Korostelina points out this element “is crucial to the development of national identity with authority-approved content and meanings. It also suppresses or redefines events and interpretations that could maintain or promote development of alternative ethnic, political, religious, and regional identities.”³¹⁰ From this perspective, the amount and nature of change in history textbooks after 1989 would offer an insight into the regime’s approach to remodelling of the Romanian identity narrative. It is telling, therefore, that Dutceac-Segesten, after

³⁰⁷ T. Gallagher, *Romania After Ceausescu* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1995), p.108.

³⁰⁸ Boia (2011), p.370.

³⁰⁹ Gallagher (1995), p.107.

³¹⁰ K. Korostelina, ‘History Education and Social Identity,’ *Identity: An International Journal of Theory and Research*, 8:1 (2008), pp.38-39.

examining the make-up of several post-revolution textbooks reaches the following conclusion:

A study comparing history textbooks before and after 1989 notices the emphasis on the national aspects and concludes that the major changes produced up to 1996 are the eradication from the old text of references to the communist ideology and the disappearance of obligatory quotes from Nicolae Ceausescu. But when it comes to changes of substance and the manner in which the national culture or the meaning of history are portrayed, there is no "revolution" but a slow and sometimes imperceptible "evolution."³¹¹

In effect, the author suggests that, apart from a rejection of communism, the content of history textbooks in the first half of the 1990s remains largely unaltered. In other words, post-1989 generations of pupils are exposed to a similar approach to Romanian history as were the generations before them. This is confirmed by University of Bucharest European Studies lecturer, Anonymous E, who points out that "we study the same history in schools, and hear the same messages propagated in public discourse."³¹²

In terms of the identity narrative, this ensures the continuity of portrayals of the Self and Other, whilst removing the sharpness in the contrast pursued by Ceausescu. This means, on the one hand, that the main features of the Romanian identity narrative become further sedimented, but, on the other, that the complexes which emerge from them are equally perpetuated. Memories of the past, particularly antagonisms with the threatening Others, remain salient, as does the theme of Besieged Fortress. As Boia points out, "the actualisation of an insistence on a glorious past and abandonment in this trap perpetuates confrontation with others and the immobility of the self."³¹³ In terms of the portrayal of the latter, the revolution is a significant addition to the narrative on Romania's history of struggle for affirmation and independence. However, because the identity narrative remains inward focused and

³¹¹ Dutceac-Segesten (2011), p.22.

³¹² Anonymous E, *Interview with IR University Lecturer*, by I. Tartacuta-Lawrence, 12.06.2014, tape, Bucharest, Romania.

³¹³ Boia (2011), p.390.

retrospective, the events of 1989 are portrayed as an individual victory of the Romanian people over their oppressors, in line with representations of the unification of 1918, from which emerges the 'arch over time' between the two.

The broader consequence of this depiction is that the uprising is not set in the context of the continental demise of communism. This inadvertently has significant repercussions on Romanians' view of their place within this 'new' Europe, particularly whether the revolution signals a 'return' to it, or the chance to enter it in earnest for the first time. In a sense, Iliescu missed a trick; he could have remodelled the identity narrative in such a way as to subscribe the Romanian revolution to the Pan-European anti-communist struggle. Instead, the Romanian revolution is portrayed only through its internal consequences, rather than regional ones. The result is that Romanian exceptionalism is emphasised, not so much as uniqueness but as isolationism. Much like Boia argues above, a narrative focused on the national rather than European dimension, in other words on what sets Romanians apart from Others rather than what brings them together, is one of the major drawbacks of the contemporary narrative on Romanian identity. As Schifirnet points out, the result is that "Romanians are still modelled by their own history and social world, which continues to perpetuate mentalities and ways of conduct which are incompatible with the modern European type of culture."³¹⁴ At this early stage, a discrepancy arises between Romania, still inward focused, and Europe, increasingly brought together by shared values and a communitarian spirit. This divergence, in the creation of which Iliescu's government plays a significant role, will affect the nature and success of Romania's transition, as will be explored in the following section.

This section has shown how the Romanian identity narrative was remodelled in the early 1990s, with a focus on the continuity of its major features, but with an elimination of the communist aspect. The agency of Ion Iliescu and his regime are paramount in understanding the reasons behind the perpetuation of the narrative, confirming the assumptions made by the project in Chapters 1 and 2, that agents may, indeed, interact with the structure of the identity narrative in meaningful ways.

³¹⁴ Schifirnet (2009), p.478.

However, the consequence of this re-evaluation in a manner which downplays the communist element but keeps its insistence on national values and the role of the state as enabler, is that the anxieties these sedimented claims about Romanian identity create, especially in regards to change and challenges to state sovereignty, would continue to influence both elites' and the public's attitude towards transition during the next half of the decade.

Romania in the Transition Era – Foreign Policy Direction and Domestic Reform

Arguing that Romania remained inward looking and retrospective is not to say that it wished to remain separated from the broader international community. However, this particular representation of the Self and Other impacted both the motivations behind the construction of its foreign policy agenda, as well as the manner in which transition governments went about achieving this goal. In particular, the identity narrative influenced Romania's transition-era behaviour in two specific areas, one of which set the prerogative of its foreign policy, whilst the other acted as an obstacle in its achievement. The first is the priority of joining the West through accession to the EU and NATO in play throughout transition; the second is the resistance to change alluded to above, noticeable both at societal level and in the policies pursued by the Iliescu regime (1990-1996). Both of these issues will be examined in turn.

Desire to Join the West – Stronger commitment towards NATO

Identity offers an alternative avenue for understanding the motivations behind Romania's foreign policy agenda after 1989. Although Euro-Atlantic integration was, by-and-large, the general direction pursued by all post-socialist states, in Romania the identity narrative played a significant role in the decision to adopt this course. The desire to join the West had its roots in Romania's own questions regarding its role in the emerging regional and international world order. More importantly, it was also linked to identity-based prerogatives which draw on the theme of Besieged Fortress. Ensuring the security of the state and its protection from, particularly Russian and Hungarian, interference was a matter of pre-eminence in the changing environment following the end of the Cold War. Accession to the EU and NATO were the two main

goals formulated for these purposes as membership of these organisations would serve different but interrelated objectives. The EU offered Romania economic security and held the prospect of future prosperity whilst accession guaranteed that its territorial integrity would be acknowledged and respected by fellow members; in this, the dispute with Hungary, also a candidate, over Transylvania was of critical importance. On the other hand, NATO offered physical security and would embed Romania in the American sphere of influence, effectively countering the threat posed by Russia.³¹⁵ Additionally, accession to both alliances would finally constitute proof that Romania has been accepted as a member of the Western community, after having languished behind the Iron Curtain for five decades.

Identity-related factors played a crucial part in the articulation of these goals, but also the intensity with which they were pursued. On these issues there was complete alignment between the public and its elites. Polls showed Romanians were overwhelmingly in favour of accession – in the mid-1990s 97% of the population supported Romania's joining the EU,³¹⁶ and 95% its entering NATO, highest amongst Eastern European applicants.³¹⁷ On the other hand, but for a brief moment in 1991,³¹⁸ the direction was unanimously pursued by all political parties and all succeeding transition governments. A Liberal Party Youth leader interviewed by the author outlines Romania's "constant pro-European and pro-American foreign policy course" and the fact that "after the defining of these two directions by vast political consensus, any evolutions were not of substance, being at the most issues of nuance."³¹⁹ Cross-party agreement over these two goals is perhaps one of the most striking features of Romania's transition. In the case of the EU, this is evident in the fact that, when Romania formerly submitted its request for membership, "all parliamentary parties convened at a conference on 21 June 1995, and signed a statement agreeing to a

³¹⁵ D. Turnock, 'Romania: Contemporary Geopolitical Perspectives,' *Geopolitics* 6:1 (2001), p.128.

³¹⁶ Roper (2000), p.118.

³¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p.123.

³¹⁸ Before the end of the Cold War, Iliescu signed a treaty of alliance with the Soviet Union which remained unratified because of the latter's dissolution six months later. The following chapter will examine the issue in more depth.

³¹⁹ Anonymous A, *Interview with PNL Politician*, by I. Tartacuta-Lawrence, 10.06.2014, email, Bucharest, Romania.

common integration strategy.”³²⁰ As for NATO, Boia has pointed out that joining the Transatlantic Alliance had become a “near national obsession.”³²¹ Turnock summarises Romania’s agenda well when he states that it was “focused unconditionally on integration with Europe through membership of the EU and NATO which would do much for the country’s security in a region historically prone to turbulence.”³²²

However, from the unanimous desire to join the West to attaining membership there remains the important step of the accession process. In its commitment to prove itself a worthy candidate, Romania exhibited an ambiguous behaviour which requires some attention. Namely, this refers to the state’s approach in what concerns the EU and NATO. Although it was amongst the first states to submit its application for EU membership, Romania quickly fell behind its neighbours in addressing the necessary criteria – negotiations began in 1999, and Romania only joined in the later wave of 2007, alongside Bulgaria, three years after the bulk of the Eastern contingent. The identity-based reasons behind this delay are explored in further detail in the following section; for now, it is sufficient to argue that at the root lies the inability or unwillingness to match up the pace of domestic reform required for accession to that of its elites’ rhetoric on the importance of attaining this goal. In its relation to NATO, on the other hand, Romania was able to show its commitment not only through words, but also action. In 1994 it became the first state to sign NATO’s Partnership for Peace.³²³ By 1996, it had also “participated in 960 activities with NATO member forces.”³²⁴ Unwavering dedication made it one of NATO’s most reliable partners even before accession, despite the fact that it had been left out of the expansion wave of 1997, again because of the lack of domestic reform. On the international scene however, the regional and global climate offered opportunities for the state to make itself useful to the US – it sent troops to Kosovo, Afghanistan and Iraq and even took Washington’s side on the issue of taking American servicemen from under the jurisdiction of international criminal court, going against the European position.³²⁵ As

³²⁰ Roper (2000), p.118.

³²¹ Boia (2012), p.160.

³²² Turnock (2001), p.137.

³²³ Roper (2000), p.122.

³²⁴ Ibid.

³²⁵ Boia (2012), p.175.

Boia has noted, in reaction to this a European delegate “asked rhetorically whether Romania wishes to become a member of the EU or the fifty-first state of the US.”³²⁶

There is, therefore, a divergence in Romania’s attitude towards accession regarding international and domestic behaviour, which made its candidacy for membership of the EU, in particular, more challenging, but, conversely, portrayed it as a useful and reliable partner to NATO internationally. Here, working from an identity-based perspective provides particular insight into the reasons behind Romania’s behaviour. A traditional explanation may be either that membership of NATO took precedence over accession to the EU or, alternatively, it was considered a more attainable goal. It is likely that both are, to a certain extent, true. Roper argues that, in the late 1990s, “EU membership was viewed as the major long-term foreign policy priority, [while] NATO membership was considered the most important short-term objective.”³²⁷ It is certainly evident from Romania’s accession experience that fulfilling the Copenhagen Criteria proved much more challenging than responding to NATO’s requests for support. However, in this behaviour there is also a question of priority and this is, to a point, dictated by identity-related prerogatives. The crux of Romanian concerns is security, especially in its physical dimension of ensuring the territorial integrity and independence of the state, which draws on the theme of Besieged Fortress. Particularly in the context of a historically volatile region, the protection of their state and its pro-Western direction are critical. Additionally, the portrayal of the Russian Other means that Moscow is viewed as a constant danger to Romania’s independence and its pursuit of joining the Western community. Anchoring Romania in the West through these alliances is the main measure of guarding from the Russian threat and regional instability, more broadly. NATO, as a military alliance, serves these prerogatives better than the EU, and as such, accession to it became the primary focus of Romanian governments. This is evident in Romania’s international behaviour, explaining Boia’s description of it as a ‘national obsession.’ Former Foreign Affairs Minister and later head of the Secret Service, Teoder Melescanu captured this view when he argued that “while the adjustment to EU standards would imply a reasonable

³²⁶ Ibid.

³²⁷ Roper (2000), p.122.

period of transition, security needs are immediate and can become stringent.”³²⁸ In other words, precedence is given to ensuring security over other goals, such as those satisfied by EU accession, namely the prospects of economic security and inclusion in the European community. In its relation to NATO and its international behaviour, therefore, Romania is guided by the priorities generated from historically enduring claims about its identity.

Obstacles to Accession – Resistance to Change and Insistence on State Sovereignty

The previous section outlined the motivations behind Romania’s desire to join the West and the prioritising of the issue of security, pursued internationally primarily through unwavering commitment to NATO. If in terms of its foreign policy agenda the direction was clear, and remained constant throughout the transition era, the first half of the 1990s was a period when Romania made little advancement on the domestic reform front. As such, understanding the identitary anxieties behind this reluctance to enact meaningful reform requires an analysis of the behaviour of the Iliescu regime, in power at the time. In a sense, the political elite failed to understand that the accession process would require profound structural changes to the domestic environment, in all areas from the socio-political to the economic. Although the notion that internal reform was necessary was undoubtedly recognised, the level of pressure from the EU and NATO on the nature and pace of these developments was difficult to reconcile with Romanians’ traditional views on the role of the state and the approach of their leaders. This may perhaps be motivated by Romanians’ views on the essential separation between the international and domestic spheres but also their perception of what ‘Europe’ actually meant. As Boia has argued,

Not everyone understands the same thing by ‘entry into Europe.’ Many focus on the benefits (...) preferring to ignore the structural transformations imposed by such a direction, the necessary re-elaboration of political and cultural reference points, as well as the inevitable limiting

³²⁸ Melescanu, cited in Roper (2000), p.122.

of national sovereignty. They continue to hope for an integrated Romania, but at the same time 'untouched' in its perennial values.³²⁹

There was, as a result, a lack of awareness that achieving their foreign policy goals required that Romanian governments incurred certain responsibilities linked to the internal transition from political and economic socialism to a fully functioning liberal democracy and capitalist system, over which the EU and NATO would exert a significant level of scrutiny. In two areas in particular, these challenges were obvious and both are connected to specific identity-based prerogatives. However, the influence of the identity narrative in this case does not manifest as a foreign policy priority but as, Boia suggests, a resistance to change of the familiar *modus operandi* of the Romanian system, as well as towards external involvement in the domestic affairs of the state, which are perceived as an infringement of its sovereignty.

Resistance to Change

The notion of a Romanian society and political elite resistant to change has been explored earlier, in the context of the immediate aftermath of the 1989 revolution. The fact that the Iliescu regime received a second endorsement in 1992 in both parliamentary and presidential elections meant that his party of reformed communists (renamed PDSR) shaped Romania's transition in the first half of the 1990s. His mandates saw the application tendered for EU accession and the signing of NATO's Partnership for Peace. The process of internal reform, on the other hand, which entailed a profound reorganisation of the state's political and economic systems focused on democratisation, liberalisation, transparency, accountability and the establishing of a free-market, was slow and Romania was unable to compete with other Eastern states: by the mid-1990s Romania had fallen "economically behind Poland, the Czech Republic and Hungary" and "was seen by many as anti-reformist and anti-democratic."³³⁰

Traditional accounts have argued that the process of state rebuilding was hindered by Iliescu himself who, according to Gallagher, was "unable to shake-off his communist-

³²⁹ Boia (2011), pp.275-276.

³³⁰ Roper (2000), p.65.

era conditioning.”³³¹ In other words, he stands accused of pursuing reform through the tactics of the former regime. Gross and Tismaneanu point out that, at the political level, “Romania’s effort at democratisation has been bogged down by its communist legacy – widespread pessimism and apathy, political dilettantism, clientelism, and (...) corruption.”³³² The approach to privatisation of the hitherto state-controlled industry is argued to be a manifestation of these tendencies. Gallagher observes that former members of the intelligence services benefitted from resources and contacts amongst the political elites.³³³ This resulted in state assets being sold to the PDSR’s clientele, ensuring that the first generation of capitalist businessmen, a *de facto* new social class, grew out of the old nomenclature. Overall, Iliescu’s economic policy, focused on incremental rather than radical reform, resulted in the “near-destruction of an economy”³³⁴ already weakened by the former regime. His policies could not but have resulted in rising unemployment and a lowering of living standards.³³⁵ More importantly, Romania’s resistance to change gave the Western community the impression that the “pursuit of closer ties with the Occident was without conviction and strictly circumstantial” and that “no great love towards the West or Western values was apparent.”³³⁶

It is evident that this attitude was largely responsible for Romania’s difficult route to Euro-Atlantic integration. However, there is an identity dimension to this which traditional explanations such as the ones above cannot account for. The argument of this thesis is that the reactionary attitude of the elites reflected the public’s anxiety towards change, particularly in regards to the role of the state, an area in which the communist legacy on the identity narrative was powerful. Anonymous D, for instance, argues that at the level of public mentality still endures the perception of the state as a provider: the experience of a strong system of state welfare has “created in citizens of all categories and almost all levels of education, a feeling of entitlement. (...) They

³³¹ T. Gallagher, ‘Romania’s Desire to Be Normal,’ *Contemporary Politics* 4:2 (1998), p.111.

³³² P. Gross, and V. Tismaneanu, ‘The End of Post-Communism in Romania,’ *Journal of Democracy* 16:2 (2005), p.149.

³³³ T. Gallagher, *Romania and the EU – How the Weak Vanquished the Strong* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2009), p.19.

³³⁴ Gallagher (1998), p.113

³³⁵ Turnock (2001), p.124.

³³⁶ Boia (2012), p.157.

expect the state to be the main investor, to provide quality and universal health care, and a certain level of salary and income.”³³⁷ The state, in the Romanian perception, must remain active in the spheres of public life, despite the obvious limitation in its capacity to maintain these services in a democratic capitalist society. Boia hints to this view as well when he notes that “as a consequence of tradition and habit (...) Romanians appear more attracted to symbols referring to national cohesion and authority than those characteristic of a democratic life.”³³⁸ It is questionable, therefore, whether blame for Romania’s troubled transition should be laid squarely at Iliescu’s door. The role of the state as protector and a certain desire for continuity and anxiety towards the unfamiliar are noticeable equally at the elite and societal level. Iliescu is, in this vein, representative of the general attitude pervasive throughout the first half of the 1990s. In other words, one would make the argument that, if the Iliescu regime was ill-equipped to respond to the challenges of transition, so too was Romania as a whole.

The Issue of National Sovereignty and the Minority Question

Subscribed to a certain extent to the issue of reform, but touching on a different anxiety which draws on the Romanian identity narrative is the inherent challenge to state sovereignty posed by the accession process. The blurring of domestic and international policy is nowhere more obvious than in the Hungarian minority question. The Szekler Hungarian community, primarily concentrated in three counties in the centre of the country, had been, as explored in the previous chapter, discriminated against by the communist regime and a victim of its nationalist discourse. In the aftermath of the revolution their situation became one of the most stringent issues for the Iliescu regime and attracted significant attention from the international community. The minority question concerned the types of rights which should be awarded to different ethnic groups by the Romanian state. In this, the Hungarian contingent had emerged as the most vocal in demanding legislation on basic minority group rights, such as education in the mother tongue or access to administrative

³³⁷ Anonymous D (2014).

³³⁸ Boia (2011), p.372.

offices in areas with significant Hungarian populations. These demands, however, were unacceptable to Romanians, as Silviu Brucan, one of the top political commentators of the day argued in 1990: “the Magyar minority wants to eliminate at a stroke every harmful effect of the assimilation campaign began in the Ceausescu period (...). The Romanians simply do not understand demands of this kind, and they evaluate all this as extremist.”³³⁹

This view has its roots in both the portrayal of the Romanian Self and of the Hungarian Other. In terms of the Self, this interpretation draws on the theme of Unity and concerns the nature of the Romanian state and ethnic Romanians’ position within it. The emphasis is on both sovereignty and national unity, as the first article of the constitution shows: “Romania is a nation-state, (...) unitary and indivisible.”³⁴⁰ As a result, ethnic minorities could be extended rights which did not contravene the three principles outlined above, and indeed Hungarians benefitted from the same individual rights as the majority, as well as “some collective rights such as the guarantee of a seat in the lower house parliament.”³⁴¹ The problem arose when the Hungarian minority demanded comprehensive group rights which would differentiate them from the rest of the Romanian citizens, particularly in regards to state education in the mother tongue, as mentioned earlier, and tighter cultural links with Hungary.³⁴² This contravened the notion that all Romanian citizens were equal as it had the implication that the state would offer extra rights to a minority group thereby discriminating against the majority. Within a state which was meant to be national and unitary, such as Romania, this was an untenable position as is clear, again, from the Constitution. While article 6(1) stipulates that national minorities have the right to preserve their ethnic identity,³⁴³ article 6(2) qualifies these rights by stating that “the protecting

³³⁹ Brucan, cited in Gallagher (1995), p.86.

³⁴⁰ Parliament of Romania, *Constitution of Romania (2003)*, Article 1(1), [n.d.] available from http://www.cdep.ro/pls/dic/site.page?den=act2_1&par1=1#t1c0s0sba1 [accessed 22 December 2016].

³⁴¹ Roper (2000), pp. 113-114.

³⁴² Gallagher (1998), p.115.

³⁴³ Parliament of Romania, *Constitution of Romania (1991)*, Article 6(1), [n.d.] available from http://www.cdep.ro/pls/dic/site.page?den=act1_2&par1=1 [accessed 7 July 2015].

measures taken by the Romanian state (...) shall conform to the principles of equality and non-discrimination in relation to the other Romanian citizens.”³⁴⁴

The situation was further exacerbated by the fact that the minority in question was ethnic Hungarian. The portrayal of this Other as an existential threat to Romania’s territorial integrity augmented suspicions over the motives behind these demands. The theme of Besieged Fortress is evident in Romanians’ reaction and the arguably excessive level of threat perception. As Dragoman argues, “the Hungarian community was largely suspected of disloyalty and even of plotting Transylvania’s secession.”³⁴⁵ On the other hand, the interest shown by its historical foe, Hungary, in the emancipation of its diaspora did nothing but further exacerbate Romanians’ distrust. For instance, the main political arm of the Hungarian minority, the UDMR (the Democratic Alliance of Hungarians in Romania) had been established with financial assistance from Hungary,³⁴⁶ sending out a clear signal of support from Romania’s neighbour for the demands of their brethren across the border. Even more worryingly, Hungary’s conservative prime minister, Jozsef Antall, had claimed to be the leader of “fifteen million Hungarians in spirit, including the five million living in other countries than Hungary.”³⁴⁷ What Romania saw in this was the concerted effort of its western neighbour to aid the Hungarian minority in achieving its aims and, in so doing, threaten the sovereignty and integrity of its territory. Iliescu captures Romania’s assessment of the situation: “governments and political forces (...) tend to use the noble preoccupation with the protection of minority rights as a substitute for putting forward territorial claims, which otherwise can in no way be accepted by the international community.”³⁴⁸

As far as Romanians were concerned the demands of the Hungarian minority were seen as threatening the integrity of the nation-state, and the involvement of Hungary

³⁴⁴ Constitution of Romania – 1991, article 6(2).

³⁴⁵ D. Dragoman, ‘National Identity and Europeanization in Post-Communist Romania. The Meaning of Citizenship in Sibiu: European Capital of Culture 2007,’ *Communist and Post-Communist Studies* 41 (2008), p.69.

³⁴⁶ L.J. Kulcsar and C. Bradatan, ‘Politics Without Frontiers: The Impact of Hungarian Domestic Politics on the Minority Question in Romania,’ *Communist and Post-Communist Studies* 40 (2007), p.303.

³⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, p.305.

³⁴⁸ Iliescu, cited in Roper (2000), p.116.

in the matter was regarded as interference in the domestic issues of their sovereign nation. Rather contrary to Iliescu's statement, the issue was complicated further by the involvement of the international community. In the background of increasing ethnic tensions and conflicts throughout Eastern Europe, the West had taken a keen interest in the protection of minority rights in post-communist states, with the OSCE stating in 1997 that the legal status and protection of the identity of national minorities "were matters of legitimate international concern and consequently did not constitute exclusively an internal affair"³⁴⁹ of states. The problem of national minority rights was becoming both increasingly internationalised and a key aspect of the accession process to Western organisations, a fact reflected in the EU and NATO's decision in December 1991 "to make minority rights one of the four criteria that candidate countries had to meet in order to become members of these organisations."³⁵⁰ Before long, the resolution of the minority issue and, more broadly, the normalisation in relations between the two states became a prerequisite for accession: "organisations such as NATO and the EU were clear to both parties that signing a basic treaty and resolving the status of ethnic Hungarians was critical to their admission into these and other Euro-Atlantic structures."³⁵¹

In this context, two seemingly conflicting identity-related goals were in play. On the one hand, resolving the minority question was paramount in Romania's accession process, its main foreign policy priority. On the other, any Principal Treaty normalising relations with Hungary would involve a level of compromise on issues related to sovereignty and unity to which few Romanians would acquiesce, as their protection was a major state prerogative. In the Iliescu regime's treatment of the issue the antagonism is clear and foreign involvement in domestic affairs remained problematic throughout the mandate: "for much of the 1990s, the government resisted attempts to internationalise the status of ethnic Hungarians,"³⁵² insisting that the issue, if it

³⁴⁹ OSCE, *Implementation Meeting on Human Dimension Issues – Consolidated Summary*, 12-28 November 1997, p.15, available from <http://www.osce.org/odihr/19941?download=true> [accessed 10 January 2017].

³⁵⁰ W. Kymlicka, 'The Evolving Basis of European Norms of Minority Rights: Tights to Culture, Participation and Autonomy,' in M. Weller, K. Nobbs and D. Blacklock (eds.), *The Protection of Minorities in Wider Europe* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), p.12.

³⁵¹ Roper (2000), p.115.

³⁵² Ibid. p.116.

existed at all, was an internal one. Consequently, negotiations over the Principal Treaty between Romania and Hungary began in 1994 and fell through in 1995. It was evidently difficult for this regime to accept that their understanding of nationhood and citizen rights contravened that of the international community and, from a broader perspective, that these organisations had any business questioning it. More importantly, here was at stake the regime's own domestic legitimacy. After all, Iliescu and the socialists had won two mandates on the back of a discourse focused on "national unity, and even unanimity, around certain values (...)." ³⁵³ Any movement on these issues, even aimed at aiding Romania's accession process, would have damaged its credibility. Maintaining of sovereignty and the protection of the national character of the Romanian state were crucial in this context.

Some authors, such as Dragoman, argue that this view is shared amongst Eastern European states, which tend to regard themselves "as members of ethnically based states. It is still difficult for them to think outside the framework of the national state (...)." Therefore, he adds, Romania and Eastern states, in general, find it challenging "to conceive a limitation of the national sovereignty." ³⁵⁴ Having said this, even if one were to accept this feature as common throughout Eastern Europe, one would argue that in Romania the difficulty of overcoming the issue of foreign interference is magnified by the portrayal of the Hungarian Other. There is a noticeable perception, at the level of both the population and its leaders, that any concessions to the Hungarian minority cause would automatically snowball into demands for territorial autonomy or even independence. Although some traditional accounts have suggested that Romanian elites were, in effect, exploiting the insecurities of the masses by artificially augmenting the 'Hungarian threat,' ³⁵⁵ the identity-based perspective suggests that many Romanians indeed believed there was a genuine danger, not least due to prime-minister Antall's statements, that the state would break-up along ethnic lines, as it had

³⁵³ Boia (2011), p.373.

³⁵⁴ Dragoman (2008), p.74.

³⁵⁵ See Gallagher (1995).

in the past. As Kulcsar and Bradatan point out, Romanian elites demonstrated a “fixation that autonomy of any kind (...) will eventually lead to secession.”³⁵⁶

As a result, in this issue, as in that of domestic reform, the identity narrative influenced Romania’s behaviour and acted as an obstacle to the state’s accession to the EU and NATO. More importantly, the transition government’s inability to navigate these challenges effectively shows the essential disconnection between Romania’s view on the role of the state and its prerogatives, and those of the Western community. It may simply be the case that the Iliescu regime was essentially unable or unwilling to enact the changes necessary for admission to the European club. On the other hand, it may be that, during early transition, Romanians as a people were not prepared to renounce certain traditional values and the ‘national’ direction in favour of Westernisation. It is also plausible that both interpretations are true, in that an incompetent political leadership stuck with the familiar while their actions were perceived as legitimate by a public who, similarly, had no other reference point for their assessment other than the perceived pursuit of identity goals. In any case, during the transition era it is in the period between 1990 and 1996 that identity-related anxieties most obviously informed Romania’s behaviour towards reform and the minority question.

The Retreat of Identity Anxieties in the mid-1990s

Finally, one should consider the question of why the conservative facet of Romanian society showed itself so prominently in these first stages of transition. In addressing this, one would argue that the identity perspective employed here sheds light on the complexities of Romanian motivations for action in a manner inaccessible to traditional accounts. Iliescu’s regime had not acquired and maintained power solely through machinations and propaganda, but, instead, was reflecting as well as shaping the views of the broader population. From this perspective, the answer may lie in the consequences of the shock caused by the revolution. As Hudson has put it, “there are times, particularly in the wake of great systemic or subsystemic change, when a nation-state may encounter profound uncertainty”³⁵⁷ in addressing the question of

³⁵⁶ Kulcsar and Bradatan (2007), p.307.

³⁵⁷ Hudson (2013), p.119.

‘who are we?’ In these situations, it is up to the elites to offer society an answer and a direction. As Hudson continues, “to be successful in steering that discussion, these forces will have to tap into deep cultural beliefs actively shared or lying dormant among a large majority of the populace.” More importantly she adds, “in such times, the primacy of the question ‘who are we?’ may trump all other questions of success or failure or risk in foreign policy.”³⁵⁸ It is beyond doubt that the socialists did tap into already existing profound beliefs and were able to perpetuate them. On the other hand, this shows a particular predilection towards inertia, rooted in the continuity of the identity narrative. One would argue that, between 1990 and 1996 Romania adopted a reactionary attitude in a time of profound system change. In other words, post-revolutionary anxieties born out of uncertainty over the future were, in many ways, compensated in Romania by a re-emphasising of identity certainties – Romanians may not have known what they were heading towards, but they knew who they were and what they stood for. From here emerges the disjunction between their foreign policy goals and the half-hearted commitment to enact changes at the domestic level.

Much like in the case of communism, however, an identity-based domestic legitimacy could only sustain the regime for so long. As the economic situation deteriorated, and it became clear that Romania was falling behind its Eastern neighbours in the accession process, the public reacted in the 1996 elections by ousting the Iliescu regime. There was, in this, a re-evaluation of identity priorities. In the socialists’ place came a right-wing coalition led by a fresh face, president Emil Constantinescu, a university lecturer. This change had significant repercussions on Romania’s development and the manner in which it was perceived internationally. The coalition ran on a message of commitment to addressing the issues either ignored or mishandled by the socialists, particularly in the area of government spending and privatisation.³⁵⁹ According to Gallagher, “there were widespread expectations that in 1996 a turning-point had been reached which would enable a genuine transition to

³⁵⁸ Ibid.

³⁵⁹ Roper (2000), p. 82.

political and economic pluralism to get underway.”³⁶⁰ Moreover, this change in government improved Romania’s prospects of accession as it “sent a signal to the EU and NATO that the country was willing to address reform.”³⁶¹ Although the coalition government had issues of its own, its legacy remains that of speeding up Romania’s Western accession process – during Constantinescu’s mandate Romania began formal negotiations with the EU (1999), signed the Principal Treaty with Hungary (1996) and enhanced its cooperation with NATO. More importantly, its election signalled the entrenching of the democratic process. As Gross and Tismaneanu have argued, their victory “finally create[d] a culture of political alternation and free public discourse that most Romanians had never before experienced.”³⁶² From 1996 Romania saw a healthy alternation of left and right wing governments, all of which prioritised the goal of accession over that of protecting national values, the socialists included. It is telling, in this view, that Romania gained membership of NATO in 2004, during Iliescu’s final mandate. Although Romanian conservatism still held sway over an important part of Romanian society, identity-related anxieties receded, allowing for the desire to join the West to become the predominant attitude driving Romania’s behaviour. EU membership was finally attained in 2007, under president Basescu and his right wing coalition.

Conclusion

This chapter has explored the nature of Romania’s identity narrative at the time and after the 1989 revolution, and how it fed into the state’s behaviour during transition. The perspective offered here complements traditional accounts of the state’s difficult transition, by focusing on how the identity narrative was utilised by the Iliescu regime, but also how it, in turn, influenced its behaviour. The role played by agency in re-conceptualising the claims made about Romanian identity in this context is vital, as these provide the basis for the contemporary narrative. Equally, identity-related factors are critical in accounting for the priority of all of Romania’s transition governments to satisfy the prerogative of ensuring the security of the newly liberated

³⁶⁰ Gallagher (2009), p.19.

³⁶¹ Roper (2000) p. 122.

³⁶² Gross and Tismaneanu (2005), p.152.

state by accession to the EU and NATO. On the other hand, the complexes and anxieties which draw on the portrayal of the Self and Other had the effect of stymying these endeavours. Specifically, the resistance to change in the domestic sphere and insistence on maintaining national sovereignty during the 1990-1996 period damaged Romania's international prospects. In this, both the Iliescu regime and broader society's reactionary attitudes played a significant part. It was not until these anxieties receded, under a new political leadership, that the accession goal took precedence to the protection of national values.

Beyond these consideration two important points which emerge from the period of transition as examined in this chapter are, firstly, the unanimity behind the decision to pursue Euro-Atlantic integration at both political and societal level, which reflects the pervasive perception that this direction was essential, and the only option, to satisfying the prerogative of ensuring the state's security. The following chapter, on Romania's relationship on Russia will expand on this notion from the perspective of the two states' bilateral relations. A second point would be that the relationship between Romania and Hungary is one based on suspicion and anxiety concerning the motivations behind their actions. Chapter 6, on the relationship between Romania and Hungary will explore the roots and consequences of this attitude in more detail, building on the account offered here.

Chapter 5. Romania's Relationship with Russia – Surviving in the Shadow of the Great Eastern Power

A Romanian state surrounded by Slav states may seem for the enemies of the Romanian people a pleasant illusion; for Romanians it is a calamity, which foretells new battles, a disaster, the only consolation to which is knowledge of the endurance of the Romanian people and its hope for victory.³⁶³

Introduction

This chapter examines the influence of the Romanian identity narrative on its relationship with Russia, whilst setting this interaction in the broader context of Romania's general foreign policy direction. The chapter begins with a section on Romania's post-accession foreign policy agenda and expands on the notion that a lack of coherent strategy has been the hallmark of the state's international behaviour since 2007. Contrary to this view, the thesis argues that the current international climate has provided Bucharest with an opportunity but also the necessity of constructing a clear strategy in which curbing Russian expansionism occupies an important role. Following on from this, the manner in which the Russian Other has been portrayed within the Romanian identity narrative is explored, with an emphasis on the Self-Other contrast and the representation of Russia as an essentially threatening force. From this the chapter makes the case that the portrayal of the Russian Other translates into pervasive attitudes of anxiety, suspicion and fear over Russia's actions, which have impacted relations between the two states since the 1989 revolution. The chapter continues with an investigation of the interaction between Romania and Russia during transition, focused on the identity-related reasons behind the difficulty of establishing normal relations. The analysis is then brought to the present day, through an examination of Romania's behaviour towards Russia after the 2007 accession to the EU. It is argued that current regional and continental developments, such as Russia's

³⁶³ M. Eminescu, 'În lupta cu panslavismul [At War with Panslavism],' *Timpu* (June 1878), available from http://www.historia.ro/exclusiv_web/portret/articol/eminescu-rusia-vrea-s-mistuiasc-poporul-rom-n [accessed 29 December 2016].

increased involvement in the affairs of European states and the annexation of Crimea, have led to a cooling of relations between Romania and Russia. Additionally, the repercussions of Russia's actions and, in particular, the dissonance amongst European states on what constitutes an effective response, are explored. The chapter outlines Romania's position, rooted in the augmentation of its already existing identity anxieties, emphasising its hard-line approach vis-à-vis Russia, and Moscow's reaction to this stance. Finally, the chapter offers a prediction of the future of Russian-Romanian relations set in the broader context of Romania's general foreign policy agenda and based on several scenarios contemplated by Romanians on the potential development of current situations at play in Ukraine and across the continent. Two issues are specifically addressed – the perception that Russia's involvement in the affairs of EU and NATO states is threatening the cohesion and ability of the two organisations to counter Moscow; and the fact that Russia's foreign policy agenda has yet to be fully revealed. In this setting, the section examines Romania's potential course of action and its repercussions on Romanian-Russian and NATO-Romanian relations. The aim of this chapter is to utilise the identity-perspective to highlight the complex rationale which motivates Romania's behaviour towards Russia, and portraying it as an autonomous actor the direction of whom is not defined solely by alignment with its allies.

[A Note on Romania's Contemporary Foreign Policy and the Current International Climate](#)

The previous chapter examined Romania's post-1989 foreign policy direction and the challenges posed by transition and the accession process. The thesis will follow on from this account with an analysis of its relationships with three actors which are all crucial in understanding the state's current foreign policy agenda. However, before turning to Russia, the subject of this chapter, it is necessary to expand on the context in which this interaction, as well as those with Hungary and the Republic of Moldova,

are set. This concerns Romania's foreign policy direction since its accession to the EU in 2007, which marks the *de facto* end of the transition period.³⁶⁴

Two issues emerged from the interviews conducted for the purposes of this project in 2014: firstly, that the singular international goal during transition was accession to the EU and NATO; and secondly, that once these were achieved there existed a sense of uncertainty regarding Romania's current foreign policy prerogatives. University lecturer, Anonymous E, argued that "Romania's strategy was influenced by the two targets but my problem is that it is not clear to me what happened after 2007, (...) I am uncertain as to what objectives we have on the horizon for the future."³⁶⁵ Liberal politician and political science professor, Anonymous C, shares this view: "I would say that after 2004, and especially after 2007, the difference between home and European affairs disappears, and, as a result, our foreign policy is facing an identity crisis."³⁶⁶ Anonymous B, a lecturer on migration policy, expounds on the nature of this challenge: "at the moment, it is clear that we must play a certain card, but I am not certain we have identified what that is; because, on the one hand, we must negotiate our foreign policy in the context of the EU and NATO, but we must also pursue our own interests."³⁶⁷ What is revealed is a picture of Romania as a state which has been given a direction, one dictated by its international alliances. Anonymous A argues that this is clear in Romania's position within the EU and NATO: "Inside the European Union, it has become accustomed to the role of laggard (...). Strategically, it is aligned to the United States, which does not leave room for many nuances."³⁶⁸ The question thus arises, as Anonymous B also notes, of what remains of Romania's national interests and to what extent the state is showing any level of individuality in its agenda. Former Culture Minister Anonymous D believes this is not the case: "our policy is alignment; we have no new targets. (...) Romania is almost imperceptible,

³⁶⁴ Although Romania joined NATO in 2004, this thesis considers 2007 to be the actual end of transition, not least because it was the area of domestic reform necessary for fulfilling the EU accession criteria that Romania found most challenging in its transition from socialism, as has been explored in the previous chapter.

³⁶⁵ Anonymous E (2014).

³⁶⁶ Anonymous C, *Interview with Political Science University Lecturer*, by I. Tartacuta-Lawrence, 11.06.2014, tape, Bucharest, Romania.

³⁶⁷ Anonymous B, *Interview with University Lecturer on Minority Issues*, by I. Tartacuta-Lawrence, 06.06.2014, tape, Bucharest, Romania.

³⁶⁸ Anonymous A (2014).

invisible, it has not made any remarkable choices in its foreign affairs. (...) Our foreign policy is, if you wish to describe it in negative terms, mediocre; in positive terms, well-behaved.”³⁶⁹

Whether one views Romania’s adoption of EU and NATO goals as its own as either natural or troubling, the general consensus seems to be that, as Anonymous C summarises, “Romania’s capacity for deciding on its foreign policy is much reduced since 2004; before 2004, we had a certain independence in decision-making; today (...) the degree of Europeanisation of Romanian foreign affairs is very high.”³⁷⁰ The specific areas of interest for Romania are thought to be the Black Sea region and the European Neighbourhood policy,³⁷¹ but also in strengthening the Eastern partnership.³⁷² The degree to which the state has been successful in pursuing these avenues, however, is considered limited by these observers, because of the role already assumed in these areas by more important regional players, such as Poland,³⁷³ Turkey or Russia.³⁷⁴ These views may have indeed applied in 2014, when the interviews were conducted. What is undeniable, at the very least, is that the clear foreign policy direction which emerged in the transition period was no longer noticeable in Romania’s international behaviour.

This thesis argues that this is no longer the case and that the identity-based perspective offered by this thesis may shed light on the reasons behind this development; events over recent years have altered significantly the international and regional climate. Nestled within the Euro-Atlantic organisations, Romania enjoyed a sense of stability and security which could explain its passive post-accession foreign policy. In the last couple of years, however, the equilibrium of Eastern Europe and the continent, more generally, has been rocked by events like the crisis in Ukraine and Hungary’s eastern shift. Internal dissension between EU states and rising tensions between the European community and Russia have provided the opportunity and the necessity for Romania to play a more active role on the regional scene. Its strategic

³⁶⁹ Anonymous D (2014).

³⁷⁰ Anonymous C (2014).

³⁷¹ Anonymous B (2014), Anonymous C (2014).

³⁷² Anonymous A (2014).

³⁷³ Anonymous E (2014).

³⁷⁴ Anonymous C (2014), Anonymous D (2014).

position on the border of the EU and NATO with the European neighbourhood and Russia means that it now has an avenue to assume greater responsibilities as a member of these alliances, but also to pursue its own national interests. More importantly, regional developments have led to a reactivation of profound identity anxieties concerning state security and a re-evaluation of its priorities; in other words, they have provided an impetus for action. What the following chapters will examine is the bilateral relationships Romania has established with its two significant Others, Russia and Hungary, and its Estranged Self, the Republic of Moldova. However, the manner in which Romania negotiates its position towards these actors must be set in the context of the state's general foreign policy agenda. In other words, Romania's interaction with the subjects of the three case studies offer hints at the part the state is capable and willing to play on the international scene in the current context. More importantly, the thesis will portray Romania as an actor with distinct interests which harnesses its strategic position in order to achieve specific identity-based goals. The influence of the identity narrative in the construction of these relationships and its foreign policy agenda will be examined, revealing the complex motives behind Romania's international behaviour. The notion that Bucharest's direction may be qualified simply through alignment to that pursued by its allies, as both interviewees and traditional accounts of Romanian foreign policy may argue, will be challenged throughout the remainder of this thesis.

Romania's Identity Driven Attitude towards Russia – Distrust, Fear and Anxiety over Security and Independence

As per the main assumptions of this thesis, one would argue that Romania's contemporary relationship with Russia is shaped by its historical narrative regarding their interaction and the manner in which these experiences have been translated into the identity narrative. The particular portrayal of the Self and Other influences Romanians' attitudes towards Moscow and informs interpretations of their actions. Furthermore, the continuity of the historical and identity narrative leads one to make two inferences, which apply equally to the other two case studies: firstly, representations of the Russian Other have become sedimented, ensuring that

perceptions are widespread and enduring; secondly, the reproduction of the historical narrative along the same lines as in the formative period of the Romanian nation-state means that the memory of past events is particularly vivid. As a result, in order to understand the nature of Romanian attitudes towards Moscow, one should summarise the manner in which the Russian Other has been subscribed to the historical and identity narratives.

The chapter on the development of the Romanian identity narrative has already outlined the importance of constructing a sharp contrast between Self and Other. During the Middle Ages the Romanian states' modest condition had to be reconciled with the exceptionalism implicit in the Foundation Myths. The result was a historical narrative focused on self-victimisation which portrayed Romanians as casualties of the expansionist and oppressive tendencies of more powerful Others, whilst also emphasising their uncanny capacity for resisting foreign interference. In identity terms this translates into the theme of the Besieged Fortress. As Boia summarises, self-victimisation creates a perception that Romanians have been "thrown from side to side by the waves of history."³⁷⁵ Drawing on the theme of Besieged Fortress is the theme of Unity. Efforts to create an independent nation-state which brought together all the Romanian regions were legitimated by nineteenth and twentieth-century elites as vindication for Romania's troubled history. All the more should the Romanian endeavour succeed and be accepted by the international community, as its experience of the Middle Ages had been inherently unjust.

It is against this backdrop that Romania's experience of interaction with Russia is portrayed. Although Russia enters the scene much later than the Hungarian Other, its impact on the Romanian state's situation in the context of the themes of Besieged Fortress and Unity is just as significant. Russia's involvement in the affairs of the Romanian provinces begins in earnest in the nineteenth century, in the context of the long fought Russo-Turkish Wars. As the national project is only just getting underway, in 1812, the Tsarist Empire annexes Bessarabia, a territory historically part of Moldavia. This inadvertently means that, when the initial unification between Romania

³⁷⁵ Boia (2011), p.286.

and Moldavia takes place, it does so without the eastern half of the latter – see [Figure 3]. Russia therefore becomes subscribed to the list of powerful Others which have stymied the unification process, as Dutceac-Segesten points out: representations focus on the fact that “the national unification projects are hindered by the interference of empires both from south and from north.”³⁷⁶ Amongst them, particularly in modern times, Russia occupies an important place, not least because of the consequences of its interference on the Romanian national project. Although external circumstances were such that Bessarabia eventually united with Romania in 1918, Russia remained the sole great power in the East. Its interest in the Romanian space, as well as Bucharest’s inability to counter it, were confirmed by its retaking of Bessarabia in 1940 – see [Figure 5], the matter being settled in 1945, when the region was included in the Soviet Union. As such, the image of Russia as the main reason behind the failure of the Romanian national project was cemented. Additionally, the Soviet occupation of Romania after the Second World War and the part it played in the installation of the communist regime have entrenched the perception of this actor as an essential threatening Other. In this view, Romania truly becomes a Besieged Fortress as it was not only its prerogative for unity, but its own sovereignty and independence which were at risk.

Overall, the Russian Other has consistently been portrayed as an existential threat to the survival of an independent Romania and its national project. This, in turn, has contributed to the creation of deep-seeded resentment towards Moscow. As former advisor of the director of the Romanian Intelligence Service (SRI), R.I. Stefureac argues, “anti-Russian sentiments [have been] fuelled throughout history and [are] deeply entrenched in Romanian consciousness.”³⁷⁷ If at the time of the installation of communism Romanians already shared this view or, as Boia argues, “had little sympathy towards anything coming from Moscow,”³⁷⁸ subsequent regimes did nothing if not exacerbate the contrast between Self and Russian Other. As Boia continues,

³⁷⁶ Dutceac-Segesten (2011), p.218.

³⁷⁷ R.I. Stefureac, *Conflictul secret din spatele scenei – Romania versus Rusia: 50 de ani de realitati, mituri si incertitudini. 1964-2014* [The Secret Conflict Behind the Scene – Romania Versus Russia: 50 Years of Realities, Myths and Incertitude. 1964-2014] (Bucharest: Rao, 2015), p.37.

³⁷⁸ Boia (2012), p.107.

because of Ceausescu's discourse and actions, in particular, Romanian communism "had the paradoxical effect of moving Romania away from the West, without bringing it closer to Moscow."³⁷⁹ The failed attempts at Russification and the national, anti-Moscow direction pursued by the Ceausescu regime speak to the potency of anti-Russian sentiments at both the societal and political elite level, but also elites' unwillingness to challenge these perceptions. This was, essentially, the portrayal of the Russian Other in play at the time of the 1989 revolution. The sheer fact that, in its aftermath, the rumour spread that Russian terrorists were trying to capture the state apparatus is telling of the entrenched perceptions over Moscow's interest in interfering in the affairs of their state.

This image of Russia has translated into particular attitudes which influenced, after 1989, not only Romania's relationship with Moscow, but also its general foreign policy direction. Specifically, the representation of the Russian Other as an existential threat is reflected in a powerful anxiety, suspicion and even fear concerning the actions and influence of this actor. Inayeh summarises this belief well when she notes that "there is (...) little affinity with Russia within Romanian society. Instead, the complicated historical relationship and the country's non-Slavic origins have contributed to a general distrust of Russia."³⁸⁰ Additionally, as Boia points out, "Romanians look to Russia as to something hazy and not to be recommended, somewhere in the East."³⁸¹ The general view is that Russia remains a great power but that its interests necessarily go against Romania's. As Anonymous D argues, "there are few, if any, filo-Russians [in Romania]," to which he adds, "for obvious reasons."³⁸² Because of the perception that Russia has inherent expansionist tendencies and is motivated by a desire to maintain and strengthen its sphere of influence, the relationship between the two states will necessarily be an uneasy one. As ambassador to the United States, George Maior has argued, this is a reproduction of their history of interaction: "relations between Romania and the expansionist states which succeeded one another in the Eastern

³⁷⁹ Ibid., p.225.

³⁸⁰ A. Inayeh, 'Romania: Largely Immune to Russian Pressures,' in *A Region Disunited? Central European Responses to the Russia Ukraine Crisis – Europe Policy Paper*, The German Marshall Fund, February 2015, p.41.

³⁸¹ Boia (2012), p.225.

³⁸² Anonymous D (2014).

space, whether the Tsarist Empire, Soviet Union, or now the Russian Federation, may be subscribed to a paradigm in which dominated hostility over friendship, conflict over cooperation.”³⁸³

More importantly, during transition the notion that there exists an inherent antagonism between Romania’s prerogatives, most notably concerning the independence and security of the state, and Russian interests played an important part in the setting of Romania’s agenda. From an identity perspective one is able to reveal the desire to join the West as being rooted in both the priorities derived from the portrayal of the Self, as well as anxieties concerning Russia’s potential revival of its expansionist tendencies. Past experiences and the representation of the Russian Other ensured the unanimous pursuit of a pro-Western direction aimed at safeguarding Romania from interference from Moscow. The quality of bilateral relations between Romania and Russia, on the other hand, will reflect this choice to pursue a clear demarcation from Moscow. In other words, Romania’s aim of achieving European and Transatlantic integration could not but have led to further cooling of Romanian-Russian bilateral relations.

Russo-Romanian Relations During the Transition Period

Relations between Romania and Russia were complicated during transition not only because, after the revolution, Romania “turned to the West,”³⁸⁴ as Boia argued, but also because of Russia’s own assessment of this agenda. In a sense, pursuing a pro-Western agenda and maintaining good relations with Russia are mutually exclusive directions in what Moscow is concerned. Reflecting this view is New-Euroasianist theorist Alexandr Dugin who suggested that Romania, as part of the buffer zone between the West and Russia, had to make a geopolitical choice between ‘continentalism’ – siding with ‘Old Europe’ (France, Germany and Russia) – and

³⁸³ G.C. Maior, ‘Studiu introductiv – Despre Conflictul din spatele scenei după 1989 și provocările următorilor ani [Introductory Study – On the Behind the Scenes Conflict after 1989 and the Challenges of Years to Come],’ in R.I. Ștefureac, *Conflictul secret din spatele scenei – România versus Rusia: 50 de ani de realități, mituri și incertitudini. 1964-2014 [The Secret Conflict Behind the Scene – Romania Versus Russia: 50 Years of Realities, Myths and Incertitude. 1964-2014]* (Bucharest: Rao, 2015), p.19.

³⁸⁴ Boia (2012), p.226.

‘atlanticism’ – supporting Great Britain and the United States.³⁸⁵ According to the author, choosing the latter would automatically be perceived by the Kremlin as an “anti-Russian orientation.”³⁸⁶ Romanian political commentator and former parliamentarian, Cozmin Gusa, suggests that, through its unequivocal pursuit of accession to NATO, Romania did indeed choose ‘atlanticism’ to the detriment of ‘Old Europe,’ effectively pitting it against Russia. Referring to Dugin’s account, he argues that “Russia will view Romania as an adversary, all the more dangerous as the global hegemon’s [i.e. the USA’s] military bases will spring up on Romanian territory.”³⁸⁷ Whether Romania was aware that this course would antagonise Russia or, indeed, was in the position during the 1990s to make a conscious decision to reject ‘Old Europe’ is debatable.³⁸⁸

One would argue, however, that joining NATO was a priority of Romanian foreign policy in transition dictated by its identity-driven prerogative to ensure the security of the state, including against Russia’s actions. In these conditions, sacrificing diplomatic relations with Moscow would have been preferable because the end-game was safeguarding its security and independence, and membership of NATO satisfied that goal. One could go even further and suggest that, to the extent that good relations with the USA were a priority, closeness to Moscow was a red-line which no government in Bucharest could have crossed without jeopardising its domestic legitimacy. The widespread sentiment over the “unacceptability of voluntary alignment with the East,”³⁸⁹ effectively meant that a pro-Western direction was the only available option for Romanian politicians across the political spectrum during the period of transition. As Boia argues, “some do point out that Russia is still a great

³⁸⁵ A. Dugin, *Bazele Geopoliticii – Vol I: Viitorul Geopolitic al Rusiei [The Foundations of Geopolitics – Vol I: The Geopolitical Future of Russia]* (Bucharest: Euroasiatica, 2011), p.15.

³⁸⁶ Ibid.

³⁸⁷ C. Gusa, *Imperialism in postcomunism: Geopolitica dezordinii in fostul lagar socialist [Imperialism in Post-Communism: The Geopolitics of Disorder in the Former Socialist Bloc]* (Bucharest: Adevarul Holding, 2011), p.24.

³⁸⁸ See D. Dungaci, ‘Geopolitica, imperialism, postcomunism si dezordine – Unde (mai) suntem noi? [Geopolitics, Imperialism, Post-communism and Disorder – Where Do We (Still) Stand?], epilogue to C. Gusa, *Imperialism in postcomunism: Geopolitica dezordinii in fostul lagar socialist [Imperialism in Post-Communism: The Geopolitics of Disorder in the Former Socialist Bloc]* (Bucharest: Adevarul Holding, 2011), p.343.

³⁸⁹ Turnock (2001), p.123.

power and normal and to some extent friendly relations with it should be established. This seems to be the least of Romanians' concern."³⁹⁰ The consequence was, however, as Anonymous B acknowledges, that "certain diplomatic links with (...) Russia were lost."³⁹¹

There is, however, one exception worth discussing here. In 1991, despite the profound anti-Russian sentiments noticeable at the societal level, Iliescu seemed unwilling to renege links to Moscow. Romania became the only Warsaw Pact state to sign a treaty with the Soviet Union which "gave Moscow an effective veto over any Romanian alliance with a Western country had it not been abrogated by the collapse of the Soviet Union six months later."³⁹² Anonymous A qualifies this now rarely discussed event of Romanian post-socialist history as "a bizarre episode."³⁹³ One would argue this was, indeed, a peculiar moment – although Iliescu's discourse focused on 'national rebirth,' here he was ignoring both his electoral promises and the public's resentment towards Moscow. It may be that Iliescu, like Gorbachev, believed that communism could be reformed from within and acted accordingly. It may also be that he was one of the pragmatists Boia mentions – acknowledging that the Soviet Union was still the super-power in the region, and that maintaining close relations to it was common-sensical. Others, such as former counsellor at the Romanian Embassy in Moscow, Vasile Buga, argued that what characterised the early 1990s was a "broad state of confusion, generated by the revolution."³⁹⁴ Resistance to change and a predilection towards the familiar were, as has been explored in the previous chapter, two of the main features of the Iliescu regime. One doubts, however, that, had the treaty ever been ratified, Iliescu's domestic legitimacy could have withstood the public opinion backlash. In any case, this is an interesting exception to the general trend of Russo-

³⁹⁰ Boia (2012), p.226.

³⁹¹ Anonymous B (2014).

³⁹² Gallagher (2009), p.133.

³⁹³ Anonymous A (2014).

³⁹⁴ V. Buga in C. Harsan, 'Romania-Rusia, Incotro? (V) [Romania-Russia, Which Way? (V)],' *Romania Libera*, 28.11.2007, <http://www.romanialibera.ro/special/documentare/romania-rusia--incotro---v--112431> [accessed 11 January 2016].

Romanian relations that shows that identity anxieties need not always prohibit endeavours of establishing good relations.

By the time Romania and Russia resumed negotiations on a bilateral treaty in 1992, however, an opposition capable of reflecting the public's powerful anti-Russian sentiments had coagulated. Two of the most significant areas of contention regarded historical grievances over the Soviet Union's treatment of Romania. The first concerned Romania's national treasure of 93.5 tonnes of Dacian gold,³⁹⁵ evacuated to Moscow during the First World War and arrested by Moscow upon Romania's occupation of Bessarabia in 1918, never to be returned. The second issue referred to the Ribbentrop-Molotov Pact (1939); more specifically, Romanians wished for Moscow to publically denounce its content, which outlined the Soviet Union's intention to recapture Bessarabia. Both the opposition and public "were pressurising president Iliescu"³⁹⁶ to force the inclusion of these issues in the treaty. Russia rejected the proposal and, at the last moment, in 1996, Romania decided not to sign the agreement. Qualifying this act, Armand Gosu, Associate Professor at the Faculty of Political Science of the University of Bucharest, argues that, most likely, Iliescu felt compelled by the strong opposition to a treaty which did not recognise these areas of dispute between the two states to renege on his commitment of cooperation with Russia.³⁹⁷

In this stance, one notices the influence of sedimented beliefs concerning Romania's identity on behaviour most prominently. Re-iterating the assumptions made in the introduction, the inter-subjective Romanian rationale for action reflects the identity-based prerogatives which flow from the theme of Besieged Fortress. Both areas of contention were crucial in Romania's assessment of Russia as a threatening Other and itself as victim - the treasure, so profoundly linked to their origins as a people, was stolen and their territorial dismemberment decided between two states more powerful than theirs. As such, rejecting a treaty which did not recognise these issues,

³⁹⁵ Inayeh (2015), p.41.

³⁹⁶ A. Gosu, 'Politica rasariteana a Romaniei: 1990-2005 [Romania's Eastern Policy: 1990-2005],' *Contrafort* (Republic of Moldova) 1 (135) (January 2006), pagination unknown, available from <http://www.contrafort.md/old/2006/135/958.html> [accessed 06.01.2016].

³⁹⁷ Ibid.

though objectively detrimental to Russo-Romanian relations, was the preferred option because signing it would have been tantamount to acknowledging Romania's inferior position vis-à-vis Russia and the forgetting of past aggressions. Both events signified transgressions against Romania's heritage and sovereignty and could therefore not be forgiven, the cost notwithstanding. Although Iliescu himself would, perhaps, have been willing to sign the treaty, the fact that he bowed to public pressure shows that the matter was one which would damage his domestic legitimacy. This was a red-line the regime could not have crossed. The consequence of refusing to sign the treaty, however, left relations between Romania and Russia on hiatus.

After 1996, argues former counsellor to the Romanian Embassy in Moscow, Vasile Buga, the quality of relations between Bucharest and Moscow "entered into decline, because Romania's foreign policy ignored this space and altered its priorities."³⁹⁸ The necessity of establishing normal bilateral relations with Russia receded with the election of president Constantinescu and his right-wing coalition, much like the identity-related anxieties towards reform mentioned in the previous chapter. Instead, the emphasis now fell on the accession process to the EU and NATO. There was little movement on the front until 2003, interestingly also under president Iliescu, when Romania achieved the first of its accession goals. According to the Romanian leader it was George W. Bush who encouraged him to pursue a 'normalisation of relations' with Russia, on the occasion of Romania's invitation to join NATO.³⁹⁹ The treaty signed later that year did condemn the Ribbentrop-Molotov pact and acknowledged the issue of the Romanian Treasure. However, questions were raised as to whether it could heal Russo-Romanian relations. Parliamentary Deputy Gheorghe Buzatu, for instance, argued that the Russian condemnation of the 1939 pact was an empty concession and their commitment to set up a commission tasked with studying existing archives on the Romanian Treasure issue would yield little result.⁴⁰⁰ More importantly and telling

³⁹⁸ V. Buga in C. Harsan (2007).

³⁹⁹ Iliescu, cited in A. Neagu, 'Ion Iliescu: Romania a avut o intelegere cu Federatia Rusa, in 2004, cu privire la normalizarea relatiilor' ['Ion Iliescu: Romania Struck a Deal With the Russian Federation, in 2004, in What Concerns the Normalisation of Relations'], *Hotnews*, 05.05.2014, <http://www.hotnews.ro/stiri-politic-17172140-ion-iliescu-romania-avut-intelegere-federatia-rusa-2004-privire-normalizarea-relatiilor.htm> [accessed 24 December 2015].

⁴⁰⁰ Buzatu, in Chamber of Deputies – Parliament of Romania, *Dezbateri Parlamentare – Sedinta Senatului din 3 Noiembrie 2003: 16. Dezbateri si aprobarea proiectului Legii pentru ratificarea*

of the anxiety towards making any compromises towards Russia, he rhetorically asked: “do we remain as a little mouse which pokes at an elephant and when we cross a bridge, we whisper in its ear warning it how much the bridge is rocking?”⁴⁰¹

Russo-Romanian relations did not significantly improve after the signing of the 2003 treaty. This was partly, according to Vasile Buga, because of Romania’s inability to capitalise on the treaty’s potential and the lack of a “clear and consistent strategy aimed towards the development of relations with Moscow.”⁴⁰² However, the former diplomat also cites Romanian preconceptions towards Russia as reasons behind the lack of a uniform approach: “these prejudices are linked, largely erroneously, to distrust of Russia, which is still viewed through perspectives constructed in the past. These are connected to moments of tension in their interaction and less so to moments when they were collaborating.”⁴⁰³ In other words, memories of past experiences still contributed to the creation of an image of Russia as untrustworthy, and essentially dangerous to Romanian interests. The theme of Besieged Fortress is apparent in this position, which led to an ambivalence in Romania’s dealings with Russia. On the one hand, Bucharest was aware that a normalisation of relations with Moscow was in its objective best interest. However, there was a perception that any concessions, particularly on issues of national importance, would place Romania in a vulnerable position vis-à-vis Russia and impact its ability to negotiate with this Other on an equal footing. Intransigence towards Moscow was, conversely, a sign of strength and that Romania was challenging its traditional small-state condition. These two antagonistic attitudes are at the root of what Buga argues characterised Russo-Romanian relations after 1990: “diplomatic activity knew periods of re-launch and recoil, which justify its qualification as incoherent and inefficient.”⁴⁰⁴

Tratatului privind relațiile prietenești și de cooperare dintre România și Federația Rusă, semnat la Moscova la 4 iulie 2003 [Parliamentary Debates – Sitting of the Senate of 3 November 2003: 16. The Debate and approval of the Law for ratifying the Treaty concerning friendly relations and cooperation between Romania and the Russian Federation, signed in Moscow on 4 July 2003], 03.11.2003 <http://www.cdep.ro/pls/steno/steno.stenograma?ids=5565&idm=16> [accessed 08 January 2016].

⁴⁰¹ Senator Buzatu, in Senate Debate (2003).

⁴⁰² Vasile Buga in C. Harsan (2007).

⁴⁰³ Ibid.

⁴⁰⁴ Ibid.

Overall, working on the intersection of FPA and SC from an identity-based approach provides particular insight into the rationale behind Romania's behaviour towards Russia during transition. Romania's desire for Euro-Atlantic integration was not only rooted in prerogatives set by the portrayal of the Self but also in anxieties concerning Russia, based on its representation as a threatening Other through the lens of the Besieged Fortress. It may have been that Romanians, much like Dugin, viewed cordial relations with Moscow and a pro-Western course as incompatible. In any case, the profound anti-Russian sentiments in play at societal level and the ambivalence of elites in managing dialogue with Moscow resulted in a strained relationship throughout transition. In this vein, reconciliation may only have occurred after integration, when Romania was able to negotiate this relationship from a different footing. As the following section will show, however, the changing international circumstances and perceptions over Russia's own actions prevented this from being the case and, instead, resulted in an augmentation of Romanian anxieties.

Contemporary Russo-Romanian Relations

If before 2007 one of the most striking features of Russo-Romanian contact was Bucharest's ambivalence towards a meaningful level of interaction with Moscow, Romania's accession to the EU and NATO set their bilateral relationship in a new context and altered the state's position vis-à-vis Russia. The view was that Romania was now embedded in a system of alliances which guaranteed its independence from Moscow and would allow it to play a greater diplomatic role in the region, especially in terms of the EU's Neighbourhood policy. However, integration posed new challenges for Bucharest regarding its management of interaction with Russia from within the EU and NATO. As Nicolescu argued in 2010, Romania's preferred option would be a strategy which keeps Russia at arm's length but maintains the support of its allies. However, she noted, "the fact that this partnership has worked so far does not guarantee the fact that it will work just as easily in the future, since the West has less instruments in the Black Sea region (...) and Russia's political and economic interest in

this part is greater”⁴⁰⁵ than in Central and the rest of Eastern Europe. There is a recognition, therefore, that accession in itself, although it increases the interests of the EU and NATO to support Romania in its relations with Moscow, does not in itself ensure a better quality of dialogue between the two states.

Meanwhile, the alleviation of Romania’s identity anxieties regarding relations with Russia is not only contingent on accession to the EU and NATO, but also on how Moscow’s own behaviour is interpreted. As outlined in Chapter 3, the thesis argues that changes to the climate and the re-evaluation of an actor’s priorities may lead to anxieties receding or, conversely, becoming augmented. It is feasible to picture the opportune circumstances in which identity anxieties would subside on the Romanian side, were Russia to adopt a neo-liberal, even pro-Western direction that Romania perceived as non-threatening. This was, indeed, the scenario which saw Romania’s relationship with Hungary improve drastically in the late 1990s. According to Gusa, the Russian Federation did adopt a ‘strategic identity’ of this type under Gorbachev and Yeltsin between 1991 and 1993, when “it was considered that, as a result of the concessions made to the Occident, Russia’s interests in world politics would be recognised.”⁴⁰⁶ An attitude of openness towards the West may have been part of the reason why Iliescu pursued a friendly approach towards Moscow in the early 1990s. By the time of Romania’s accession to the EU and NATO and even of the signing of the bilateral treaty in 2003, however, Russia had changed its strategy. Its foreign policy agenda had been reoriented by Vladimir Putin in a direction which could only cause the re-emergence of Romanian concerns. As George Maior surmises, referring to Zbigniew Brzezinski’s proposition of three possible geostrategic options available to Russia after the dissolution of the Soviet Union:

Between the option for an advanced partnership with America, the emphasis on the near-abroad as main preoccupation for Russia, either with the aim of economic integration, or for the rebuilding of its imperial control, [and] the option for a Eurasian counter-alliance meant to combat American preponderance in Europe, Russia finds itself, today, somewhere between the

⁴⁰⁵ A. Nicolescu, ‘Changes in Romania’s Foreign Policy from the Perspective of NATO and EU Membership,’ *Romanian Journal of European Affairs* 10:1 (2010), pp.68-69.

⁴⁰⁶ Gusa (2011), p.210.

second and third options. Russian expansionism is no longer a theoretic prediction, but an effective reality of the world we live in.⁴⁰⁷

In other words, under president Putin, Russia has displayed a re-awakening of its expansionist tendencies, in regards to both its traditional sphere of influence, and its self-perception as a great power, capable of counter-balancing the United States at a global level. In this view, the EU's Eastern Partnership and NATO's expansion to the borders of the former Soviet Union represent threats to Russia's position as regional hegemon. From this stems Russia's opposition to Western efforts of establishing tighter links with the states formerly, or still perceived as part, of Russia's orbit. As Nicolescu points out, "Russia's attitude towards the European Neighbourhood Policy and the Eastern Partnership more specifically continues to be negative,"⁴⁰⁸ whilst there exists a perception that at the "core of all differences between the West and Russia is the question of whose sphere of influence the Soviet successor states fall into."⁴⁰⁹ In this view, the short military intervention in Georgia (2008), at a time when the state was negotiating closer ties with NATO, speaks to Russia's new direction.

It was in this context, therefore, that Romania had to negotiate its new strategic position. Euro-Atlantic integration may have offered Romania a guarantee of its status as a member of the Western community, but Russia's behaviour did not lead to an amelioration of its identity-based anxieties regarding its intentions. Maior, for instance, points to Russia's expansionist tendencies, such as the intervention in Georgia, and its increasingly virulent Euroasianist and anti-American discourse as the "seeds of significant long term risks."⁴¹⁰ In other words, for Romanians, Russia continued to be seen as a threat, not only to their state, but to the broader interests of the Western community. Identitary anxieties have made Romania acutely sensitive and suspicious of Russian behaviour and, as a result, relations between Bucharest and Moscow did not improve in the aftermath of accession.

⁴⁰⁷ Maior (2015), p.23.

⁴⁰⁸ Nicolescu (2010), p.69.

⁴⁰⁹ Analyst Sergei Karaganov, cited in Nicolescu (2010), p.69.

⁴¹⁰ Maior (2015), p.24.

The main perception motivating Romania's behaviour towards Russia today is that Moscow is pursuing a return to geopolitics and the reforming of its Soviet-era sphere of influence, whilst it also searches to destabilise the EU and NATO from within, threatening, at its most profound level, Romania's sense of security offered by membership. Recent regional and continental developments have cemented this interpretation of Russia's intentions and have augmented anxieties over the issue of security. At societal level, anti-Russian sentiments are pervasive: according to a 2016 INSCOP poll, 61.5% of Romanians have negative feelings towards Moscow, whilst, conversely, 49.7% believe the USA is the main ally capable of protecting their state in case of a national security threat.⁴¹¹ On the other hand, the possibility of a regional military conflict is now viewed as one of the most pressing causes for national concern.⁴¹² From this perspective, it is clear that the conflict in Ukraine has had a significant impact on Romanians' threat perceptions.

In terms of the state's behaviour in reacting to Moscow's new direction, there are several strands which deserve attention. On the one hand, as Maior has argued, Romania has been acutely aware that before switching to an aggressive expansionist agenda, signalled by the annexation of Crimea, Russia successfully employed a soft approach in relations with the West. This has resulted, in recent years, in its inclusion in the G8, and, as Maior points out, a "political-economic and even strategic openness shown towards Russia (without many inhibitions or restraints) by some European states. We would mention France, Germany, Italy, Hungary and Greece in particular, but the list is not exhaustive."⁴¹³ One would argue that Romania would, whether appropriate or not, be compelled by its identity anxieties to view any such attempts at building bridges with the West with scepticism, and with the distinct impression that Russian soft-power is but a thin veneer masking the *realpolitik* approach which has

⁴¹¹ INSCOP, *Barometrul – Adevarul despre Romania: Simpatie Tari* [Barometer – The Truth about Romania: Sympathy towards States], March 2016, available from http://www.inscop.ro/wp-content/uploads/2016/04/INSCOP-raport-martie-2016_simpatie-tari.pdf [accessed 23 December 2016].

⁴¹² INSCOP, *Barometrul – Adevarul despre Romania: Directia Tarii, Surse de Ingrijorare si Perceptia asupra Vietii* [Barometer – The Truth about Romania: The Direction of the Country, Causes for Concern and Perceptions over Livelihood], November–December 2015, <http://www.inscop.ro/wp-content/uploads/2015/12/Directia-sursele-de-ingrijorare-si-perceptia-asupra-vietii1.pdf> [accessed 23 December 2016].

⁴¹³ Maior (2015), p.28.

characterised the Kremlin's foreign policy. Indeed, this is noticeable in the state's policy of aiming for economic independence from Russia. As Maior points out that, "although it has tried, Russia was prevented (...) from acquiring strategic sectors of Romanian industry. Today we are much better prepared to defend our sovereignty against these influences and dangers."⁴¹⁴ In the energy sector, in particular, Romania has made a point out of limiting Russian imports. As Inayeh shows, its intake of Russian gas had gone down in 2013 to only 10%, from 25% a year earlier.⁴¹⁵ Additionally, as of 2016, Romania is third amongst European states in terms of its internal energy production – only 17% of its required energy is imported, compared to over 60% averaged across the EU.⁴¹⁶

This is testimony to Romanians' prerogatives of ensuring independence from Moscow, but also its suspicion of fellow EU states which are not wary of relying on Russian resources. The Romanian media have increasingly focused on the fact that several European states have strengthened economic links with Russia, and increased the continent's dependence on Russian energy imports. This is one such evaluation: "many states from within the EU have been accused over the last few years of maintaining dangerous links to Russia, as they have supported energy sector projects which would deepen reliance on the 'Great Bear.'"⁴¹⁷ A different source highlights Russian financial support for European extremist parties and the fact that "former politicians are co-opted, not to say bought, to serve Russia's interests and those of Russian companies such as Gazprom."⁴¹⁸ There is, therefore, a widespread perception that EU states are either unaware or ignorant of the Russian threat. If Romania's own relative economic independence from Moscow offers it a significant leverage in their bilateral relations, it

⁴¹⁴ Ibid., p.31.

⁴¹⁵ Inayeh (2015), p.40.

⁴¹⁶ D. Ionascu, 'Romania, al treilea stat ca independenta energetica din Uniunea Europeana. Iubirea fata de Rusia vine pe conducta [Romania, the third state in the European Union in terms of Energy Independence. Love for Russia Flows Down the Pipeline],' *Adevarul*, 21.09.2016 http://adevarul.ro/economie/stiri-economie/romania-treilea-stat-independenta-energetica-uniunea-europeana-iubirea-fata-rusia-vine-conducta-infografie-1_57e2b1065ab6550cb8dcd28f/index.html [accessed 23 December 2016].

⁴¹⁷ Ibid.

⁴¹⁸ C. Campeanu, 'Cum ne aparam de Rusia [How To Defend Ourselves from Russia,] *Romania Libera*, 4 January 2016, <http://www.romanialibera.ro/politica/institutii/analiza--cum-ne-aparam-de-rusia-lui-putin--403565> [accessed 23 December 2016].

is a cause for concern that the allies Romania relies on for support either have a diminished capacity or are not willing to pursue a strategy of detachment from Russia.

The full extent of this issue, however, is revealed in the context of international reactions to Russia's shift from what Maior called a "hidden war" to a "phase of geopolitical aggressiveness, marked by the accumulation of new territories."⁴¹⁹ The perception is that the annexation of Crimea signalled Russia's return to an expansionist agenda. An identity-based approach may shed light on what this development means for Romania. Its strategy had been a two-pronged approach of ensuring its own detachment from Russia, as we have seen, whilst supporting the strengthening of ties between the European Neighbourhood next door to it and the Western community. This applies not only to Ukraine, but, more importantly, to the Republic of Moldova, a state towards which Romanians have an identitary affinity. The conflict in Ukraine therefore exacerbated Romanian anxieties on two fronts – on the one hand, the annexation of Crimea has meant that Romanian and Russian territorial waters are now adjacent. This has brought Russia to an unpalatable proximity to the Romanian territory, as then president Traian Basescu pointed out: "let us see what will happen in Crimea, 140 miles from the Romanian coast on the Black Sea, which for a frigate means a ten hour march."⁴²⁰ On the other hand, this development has raised questions as to whether Russia's agenda has fully been revealed. Some have suggested that Russia's ultimate security goal "is to come closer to the 'mouths of the Danube,'" highlighting the fact that "this has been a historic endeavour, and the recent excessive autonomist signals from the South of the Republic of Moldova (...) are clear signs of the active measures preparing for this enterprise."⁴²¹ This has severe implications for Romania's own interests in the Republic of Moldova, the pro-Western direction of which is crucial in securing close ties between Bucharest and Chisinau.

⁴¹⁹ Maior (2015), p.29.

⁴²⁰ Presidential Administration, 'Declarația de presă a președintelui României, domnul Traian Bănescu, în urma reuniunii Consiliului European pe tema situației din Ucraina [Press Statement of the President of Romania, Mr. Traian Basescu, after the European Council Meeting on the Situation in Ukraine],' *Ministry of Foreign Affairs Press Centre*, (March 2014) <http://ue.mae.ro/local-news/958> [accessed 27 December 2016].

⁴²¹ Maior (2015), p.30.

As a result, the conflict in Ukraine is at the top of Romania's foreign policy worries and its behaviour towards Russia in this context is telling of the matter's urgency. Romania was the first state to qualify the annexation of Crimea as an act of aggression against Ukrainian sovereignty⁴²² and has, since then, supported the sending of aid to Kiev and the imposition of economic sanctions against Russia.⁴²³ The main perception of the EU's approach to the Ukrainian crisis, however, is that it has not been committed to countering Moscow's expansionist policy. This view is summarised by Dan Dungaciu, president of the Black Sea University Foundation (FUMN): "it is clear that certain EU actors wish to lift economic sanctions against the Russian Federation, to resume commercial relations with it and say that war with Russia is not worth it."⁴²⁴ This places Romania in a delicate position which increases its vulnerability: "Romania risks to remain isolated, next to Poland and the Baltic states, between Russia and its European accomplices."⁴²⁵ There is, therefore, the perception of a growing gap between European states that are acutely sensitive to Russian expansionism, and those for whom friendly economic relations with Moscow take precedence over ensuring European Neighbourhood stability.

This divergence in threat perception and interests has revealed the difficulties of the European Union which are, to an extent, inherent in its nature, of answering the challenge posed by Russian expansionism to the stability and security of Eastern Europe. Moreover, disagreement over responses to the Ukrainian crisis has driven a wedge between allies within the EU, threatening internal harmony and their future cooperation. In this context, being the advocate of a hard-line approach to Russia's behaviour, Romania, much like Poland and the Baltic states, have turned to NATO for support. Since the annexation of Crimea, Bucharest has pushed for an increased NATO

⁴²² Basescu Ukraine Statement (2014).

⁴²³ Presidential Administration, 'Declaratia Domnului Presedinte Traian Basescu, la finalul Reuniunii Consiliului European de la Bruxelles [Statement by President Traian Basescu, at the End of the European Council Meeting in Brussels], *Ministry of Foreign Affairs Press Centre*, (March 2014) <http://ue.mae.ro/local-news/963> [accessed 27 December 2016].

⁴²⁴ Dungaciu, D., 'Interviu: O batalie strategica fara precedent – investitiile americane, mai importante decat scutul de la Deveselu [Interview: A Strategic Battle without Precedent – American Investment, More Important than the Deveselu Shield], *Ora Noua*, 16.11.2016 <http://www.oranoua.ro/dan-dungaciu-o-batalie-strategica-fara-precedent-investitiile-americane-mai-importante-ca-scutul-de-la-deveselu/> [accessed 23 December 2016].

⁴²⁵ Campeanu (2016).

presence in the Eastern buffer zone. One would argue that, because of its tougher stance on Russia (compared to the EU) and its military capability, NATO's involvement in the region is becoming increasingly vital to the achievement of Romania's foreign policy goals. Under the protective umbrella of the North Atlantic alliance, Romania is, for the first time in its modern history, able to adopt a proactive, rather than passive, approach in this relationship. The resistance dimension of the Besieged Fortress now takes a different form. Romania, alongside Poland, is now accommodating an operational ballistic missile defence system and, at current president Iohannis' request,⁴²⁶ a NATO Force Integration Unit and the Multinational Divisional Headquarters South-East were inaugurated in December 2015.⁴²⁷ NATO naval exercises conducted in Romania's territorial waters in the Black Sea have been increasing in number, not least in response to similar Russian activities around the Crimean Peninsula. Finally, beyond its 'open doors' policy towards American NATO forces, Romania has strengthened its bonds with its regional NATO allies – in November 2015, it co-hosted a mini-summit in Bucharest, bringing together representatives of NATO members from the Baltic states and Eastern Europe. The aim was, according to the Romanian Foreign Affairs Ministry, to send a "strong solidarity message supporting the idea that there is a need to bolster the capability of the Alliance to respond effectively to long-term challenges arising from developments generated by the security situation in the Eastern and Southern Neighbourhood."⁴²⁸ Overall, it is clear that Romania is not only fulfilling its commitments towards NATO, but taking initiative and engaging with its allies, both international and regional, in combatting the security crisis it senses brewing in Eastern Europe.

To this behaviour Russia has responded in an aggressive fashion: in April, a Russian general declared, referring to Poland and Romania, that "nonnuclear powers where

⁴²⁶ I. Enache, 'Romania va gazdui armament greu American: tancuri, artilerie si alte echipamente militare vor fi trimise in tara [Romania Will Host American Heavy Armament: Tanks, Artillery and Other Military Equipment Will Be Sent to The Country],' *Mediafax*, 23.06.2015

<http://www.mediafax.ro/externe/romania-va-gazdui-armament-greu-american-tancuri-artilerie-si-alte-echipamente-militare-vor-fi-trimise-in-tara-14490264> [accessed 13 January 2016].

⁴²⁷ NATO, "Romania Can Count on NATO" Says Secretary General in Bucharest, 02.07.2015, http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/news_121532.htm [accessed 13 January 2016].

⁴²⁸ Romanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, *Briefing of State Secretary for Strategic Affairs Daniel Ioniță on Results of Meeting of Heads of State from Central and Eastern Europe, Held in Bucharest on 4 November 2015 – Press Release*, 11.12.2015, <http://www.mae.ro/en/node/34602> [accessed 13 January 2016].

missile-defence installations are being installed have become the objects of priority response.”⁴²⁹ The commander of the Russian Strategic Rocket Forces went even further when he suggested that “the evaluation of specialists shows that the American antimissile systems (...) will not be able to withstand an intense attack by Russian strategic units.”⁴³⁰ This time Romania has remained steadfast, not least due to the US’s assurances of support – in response to Russia’s comments, former prime-minister Ponta asserted the country’s position: “Romania cannot be intimidated with threats! The anti-missile Shield is fundamental to our national and regional security.”⁴³¹ This exchange tells us something about Romania’s interpretation of its own strategic position within NATO’s Eastern flank, but also the new footing from which it manages its relationship with Moscow. As NATO is hardening its line in dealing with Moscow, this state is able to utilise the framework offered by the North-Atlantic alliance in order to alleviate its own anxieties concerning Moscow, while, at the same time, increasing its own prestige as a valuable and proactive member of the organisation. Becoming the vanguard of NATO’s defence line against Russian expansionism is, perhaps, the niche Romania has been trying to establish for itself since accession.

In any case, its commitment to this course of action is dictated not only by alignment to the direction pursued by the organisation, but also by prerogatives emerging from its identity narrative, particularly that of ensuring its security and independence from Russia. In so doing, the political leadership is reflecting the general attitude of the population: an INSCOP poll of 2014 showed that nearly two thirds of Romanians believe that the Ukrainian conflict posed a threat to their country (64.4%) whilst 69.7%

⁴²⁹ Gen. Valery Gerasimov, cited in P. Sonne, ‘Russia Threatens NATO Over Missile Shield,’ *The Wall Street Journal*, 16.04.2015, <http://www.wsj.com/articles/russia-threatens-nato-over-missile-shield-1429185058> [accessed 13 January 2016].

⁴³⁰ M. Gen. Sergey Karakayev, cited in Draghici, ‘Rusia avertizeaza Romania: “Sistemele antiracheta nu vor putea rezista unui atac intens” [Russia Warns Romania: “Missile Defence Systems Will Not Withstand Intense Attack”],’ *Gandul*, 16.12.2015, <http://www.gandul.info/stiri/rusia-avertizeaza-romania-sistemele-antiracheta-nu-vor-putea-rezista-unui-atac-intens-14922084> [accessed 13 January 2016].

⁴³¹ Victor Ponta, cited in I. Bojan, ‘Avertismentul Rusiei pentru Polonia si Romania: Daca le place sa fie tinte, este alegerea lor [‘Russia’s Warning to Poland and Romania: If They Like Being Targets, It Is Their Choice],’ *Mediafax*, 24.06.2015, <http://www.mediafax.ro/externe/avertismentul-rusiei-pentru-polonia-si-romania-daca-le-place-sa-fie-tinte-este-alegerea-lor-reactia-lui-victor-ponta-14495363> [accessed 13 January 2016].

would support an increase in funding for the Romanian military in this context.⁴³²

Romania's hard-line approach cannot be matched by the EU, firstly because this organisation does not possess the necessary instruments to counter Russia effectively (in Romania's view), and, secondly, because it has been unable to unanimously decide on the direction and magnitude of its response. The internal tensions within the EU are evident in Germany's opposition to the Eastern flank's request for an increased NATO presence in the region expressed during the 2015 mini-summit, "for fear of exacerbating tensions between Russia and the EU."⁴³³ However, this thesis would suggest that, regardless of external pressures from the Western European Union, and at the danger of an internal rift being created between what Dugin called 'Old' and 'New Europe,' Romania is unlikely to alter this confrontational direction, because of the perception that the only manner in which to tackle Russian expansionism is to respond in kind to its hard-line approach – increased militarisation is seen as the sole viable course of action.

In this context, Russo-Romanian relations are perhaps more tense today than they have ever been, at least since the time Ceausescu was announcing his state's opposition to the invasion of Czechoslovakia. More or less veiled threats from Moscow continue to emerge and these are widely publicised. As recently as December 2016, *Agerpres* (the Romanian national news agency) was citing Vladimir Putin in his assessment that Russia's "military nuclear force potential must be strengthened, first of all with the help of rocket systems capable of guaranteeing the piercing of current or future anti-ballistic missile shields."⁴³⁴ Statements such as this, however, will only cement Romania's view that the EU's moderate approach to the Ukrainian crisis is not

⁴³² INSCOP, *Barometrul – Adevarul despre Romania: Simpatie catre Tari – Situatia din Ucraina* [*Barometer – the Truth about Romania: Sympathy Towards States – the Situation in Ukraine*], February 2015, <http://www.inscop.ro/wp-content/uploads/2015/02/INSCOP-02.2014-Simpatie-tari-si-situatia-din-Ucraina.pdf> [accessed 24 December 2016].

⁴³³ I. Anghel and C. Hostiuc, 'Summit NATO la Bucuresti, esential pentru securitatea Estului [NATO Summit in Bucharest, Essential to the Security of the East],' *Ziarul Financiar*, 03.11.2015 <http://www.zf.ro/eveniment/summit-nato-la-bucuresti-esential-pentru-securitatea-estului-14871569> [accessed 13 January 2016].

⁴³⁴ Putin cited in S. Popescu, 'Retrospectiva: Politica de externa si securitate a Rusiei 2017 [Retrospective: Russia's Foreign and Security Policy 2017],' *Agerpres*, 23.12.2016, <http://www.agerpres.ro/externe/2016/12/23/retrospectiva-politica-externa-si-de-securitate-a-rusiei-in-2017-09-51-01> [accessed 23 December 2016].

fit for purpose, and that the only viable response is the proactive direction pursued by NATO. In the current state of their relationship, Romania still views Russia as an existential threat through the lens of the Besieged Fortress theme. Having said that, what has changed is the position from which Romania negotiates its response: if in the past its reaction consisted of self-victimisation and was focused on damage limitation – such as a cultural rejection of Russification – today Romania has more freedom to act, and a significant public mandate to do so.

As these entrenched beliefs drawn from the identity narrative become the dominant influence over Romania's behaviour towards Russia, anxieties over the latter's expansionism can only be alleviated by the pursuit of a proactive and aggressive foreign policy towards Moscow. However, if this course should be a cause for dissension amongst it and fellow EU colleagues, Romania is willing to incur the cost. As this section has shown, the state has been critical of EU member states' ambivalence towards Russia's actions. Although it remains dedicated to cooperation with the EU in terms of extending economic sanctions, it is clear that Romania sees these measures as insufficient. More importantly, from the Romanian perspective, the EU is underestimating the threat posed to regional stability and security, and is prioritising economic interests to its commitment towards the Eastern Partnership, both of which are playing into Russia's hands. What is most important is the fact that Romania has found a role for itself, both within the EU and NATO. The criticisms levied at Romania's lack of a clear foreign policy direction since accession, in this perspective, no longer apply. The current international climate is as such that the opportunity and necessity have arisen for Romania to construct an intelligible and coherent agenda of tackling what is perceived as an existential threat to the state and region's stability and security. Moreover, as the prerogatives from which this agenda emerge are identity-based, and therefore shared by both elites and the broader public, the result is that, unlike other policies, this direction is pursued consistently. Telling of this fact is that Romania has neither wavered nor altered its position since 2014, although Traian Basescu was replaced by the more moderate Klaus Iohannis as president, and the technocrat Dacian Cioloș has taken over from socialist Victor Ponta as prime-minister. Altogether this means that Romania's foreign policy agenda is rooted in a rationale

more complex than traditional FPA approaches might assume, as identity-related prerogatives are powerful motivators for this state's action. It is the case that the national identity narrative indeed plays an important role in shaping Romania's international behaviour, and its relationship with Moscow.

Future Directions for Russo-Romanian Relations

The question one should consider now is what the future might hold for Russo-Romanian relations and what the impact of this interaction might mean in the broader context of regional stability. There are two specific areas of interest in regards to the relationship between Bucharest and Moscow, both of which have broader repercussions in terms of Romania's perceptions of its European allies and its role within the EU and NATO: the first is the level of Russian involvement in the affairs of the continent and, as a corollary, the view that many European states are exhibiting a Russia-friendly attitude; the second concerns Russia's own actions and foreign policy agenda. Both of these areas cause an increase in threat perceptions regarding Russia and the augmentation of the theme of Besieged Fortress. That is because the external risk to Romania's security posed by Moscow is now doubled by dissent and ambivalence towards this actor from within the European community.

The first dimension concerns the perception discussed earlier, that Russia has aimed to entrench the continent's reliance on its resources, thereby forcing a more moderate response from the EU on its campaign in Ukraine. This is coupled with the rise to power of politicians more amenable towards the Kremlin in various EU states, which is also seen as part Russia's strategy or, at the very least, as playing into it. This view is summarised by Maier who argues that Russia has employed tactics which seek to "feed nationalist options hostile to liberal democracy (Hungary) (...) doubled, evidently, by measures aimed at establishing an economic dependence."⁴³⁵ Amongst the states which are exhibiting pro-Russian attitudes or close economic links with Moscow, the national newspaper Romanian Libera (Free Romania) cites Germany, Greece, Italy, Hungary, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Austria and France.⁴³⁶ Altogether these

⁴³⁵ Maier (2015), p.27.

⁴³⁶ Campeanu (2016).

examples build a picture of a trend in European politics in which Russia is no longer, or to a lesser extent, being viewed as a significant threat. Dungaciu summarises this when he argues that “there is a tendency in the European space [to adopt a more moderate approach towards Russia] to which, slowly, more and more forces are rallying.”⁴³⁷ For Romania, this development augments the anxieties subscribed to the theme of Besieged Fortress. The perception is that Europe is being attacked from within, and the rift that is growing between states with different levels of threat perception concerning the Kremlin is threatening the internal stability of the EU and NATO, as well as their capacity to curb Russian expansionism.

The scenario which emerges from this view is that Europe will become a strategic battlefield between pro and anti-Russian positions which will decide the direction and breadth of future Russian expansions of its sphere of influence: “it is clear that the Russian Federation will aim to win back certain areas of influence, and to make certain that the (...) Western front does not advance towards it. That will be the battle.”⁴³⁸ From an identity-based perspective, one would suggest that, in this internal struggle, Romania is likely to remain resolute in its stance as hard-liner. That is because an exacerbation of its perceptions as Besieged Fortress, increasingly isolated in its proactive approach, can only be answered by steadfast resistance. External pressures from its European allies are unlikely to be sufficient to cause a retreat of these anxieties, which are extremely heightened. Instead, Romania will probably continue its strategy of ensuring economic independence from Moscow. In terms of its alliances, it will likely focus on partnerships with those forces which have been unequivocal in their stance on Russian expansionism – Poland and the Baltic states, on the Eastern flank, and the USA. This view is shared by Maier, who argues that “the complete internal consolidation on all levels – political, military, economic – doubled by the strengthening of cooperation frameworks in the area of national and Euro-Atlantic security, is the only scenario in which we can build a dialogue with Russia in terms dignified for us.”⁴³⁹ What is clear is that Romania will aim to remain an important actor

⁴³⁷ Dungaciu for Ora Noua(2016).

⁴³⁸ Ibid.

⁴³⁹ Maier (2015), p.33.

on the Eastern flank and harness its strategic position to ensure increased NATO presence in its territory, and close interaction with its likeminded allies. However, for both the internal cohesion of the European Union, as well as for Russo-Romanian relations, this may cause additional strain. Despite this, Romania is compelled by its identitary prerogatives related to the security of the state to pursue such a direction, costs notwithstanding. How this type of course might affect regional stability and East-West relations more broadly remains to be seen.

If the first issue concerned Russia's threat to Romania's security via interference in the affairs of the European community, the second reflects Romania's anxieties towards Russia's actions in Ukraine as a risk to another of its foreign policy priorities, the pro-Western future of the Republic of Moldova. The perception is that Russia's agenda may contain plans for future enlargement of Russia's sphere of influence. In concrete terms, the main fear refers to the potential push from the Kremlin for a federalisation of Ukraine. This view was expressed by former president Basescu in 2014: "in Romania's opinion, the objective of the Russian Federation is, firstly, the federalisation of Ukraine. (...) It is clear that Russia wants a destabilisation of Ukraine in order to gain control over it, completely, or partially."⁴⁴⁰ Beyond the fact that this development would bring the Russian sphere to Romania's borders, a connection is immediately made between the situation in Ukraine and the one in the Republic of Moldova, its Estranged Self.

Similarly, Moldova has its own frozen conflict with a region dominated by Russian speakers – Transnistria. In this context, any move against the sovereignty of Ukraine may snowball into a threat to the independence of the Republic of Moldova, a relationship which Romania prioritises. In a sense, the prerogative for security and distance from Moscow is extended by Romania to Moldova because of their perceived identitary sameness. As a corollary, the anxieties inherent to the Besieged Fortress are

⁴⁴⁰ Hotnews, 'Traian Basescu: Russia doreste federalizarea Ucrainei/ Unul dintre obiective urmareste ca teritoriul controlat de Rusia sa ajunga pana la bratul Chilia, vechea frontiera a Romaniei cu URSS [Traian Basescu: Russia Wants the Federalisation of Ukraine/ One of the Objectives is that Russian Controlled Territory Would Reach the Chilia Arm, Romania's Old Frontier with the USSR],' 13.05.2014, <http://www.hotnews.ro/stiri-esential-17246835-ora-18-30-traian-basescu-sustine-declaratie-presa.htm> [accessed 23 December 2016].

also projected onto this state. As Dungaciu summarises, “any federalisation of the Ukraine will give ideas that the conflict in Transnistria may also be resolved through federalisation (...). I am afraid this is what is in store for the Republic of Moldova.”⁴⁴¹ The fact that Romania has intensified its support for the Republic of Moldova, both through NATO⁴⁴² but also in their bilateral relations - it has, for instance, begun supplying it with gas in order to “alleviate its dependence on Russia”⁴⁴³ - speaks to concerns over its future. Romania is undoubtedly aware that this course of action will antagonise Russia beyond simply the issue of intensifying NATO presence in the region. As Campeanu points out: “Romania will be put in the firing line if it does not wish to see Moldova become a Russian exclave.”⁴⁴⁴ Having said that, because of the identity affinity with Chisinau, Romania views Moldova as another Besieged Fortress and itself as having a duty to intervene. As a result, the risk of further antagonising Russia is insufficient to force Romania to divert from this course.

It is, however, on the manner in which Romania might best aid Moldova that issues might arise in the Romanian-American partnership. Specifically, over the last two years, the notion that a precipitation of the situation in Ukraine which would directly threaten Moldova’s independence might be answered by an *ad hoc* unification between Romania and its eastern neighbour is gathering impetus. Although this matter will be discussed at length in the chapter dedicated to Romanian-Moldovan relations, suffice it to say for now that such a development is considered a plausible

⁴⁴¹ Dan Dungaciu cited in Fundatia Universitara a Marii Negre [Black Sea University Foundation] (via Realitatea TV), *Dan Dungaciu: ‘Rusia va incepe o ofensiva diplomatica nemiloasa in Ucraina.’ Ce risca Moldova [Dan Dungaciu: ‘Russia Will Begin a Ruthless Diplomatic Offensive in the Ukraine.’ The Risks for Moldova]*, 25.03.2016, <http://fumn.eu/en/dan-dungaciu-rusia-va-incepe-o-ofensiva-diplomatica-nemiloasa-in-ucraina-ce-risca-r-moldova-video/> [accessed 07 April 2016].

⁴⁴² Romania has been an active supporter of Moldova’s increased cooperation with NATO and the EU. To this end, after the NATO summit in Warsaw earlier this year, president Iohannis emphasised his commitment to the Eastern Partnership and hailed the “inclusion, for the first time in a NATO Summit Final Statement, as a result of our undertaking, a distinct paragraph referring to the Republic of Moldova.” (Iohannis, cited in Presidential Administration, ‘Declaratia de presa a Presedintelui Romaniei, domnul Klaus Iohannis, sustinuta la finalul Summitului NATO de la Varsovia [Press Statement from the Romanian President, Mr. Klaus Iohannis, Given at the End of NATO Summit in Warsaw],’ 09.07.2016, <http://www.presidency.ro/ro/media/agenda-presedintelui/declaratia-de-pres-a-presedintelui-romaniei-domnul-klaus-iohannis-sustinuta-la-finalul-summitului-nato-de-la-varsovia> [accessed 28 December 2016].)

⁴⁴³ Innayeh (2015), p.41.

⁴⁴⁴ Campeanu (2016).

scenario even by Klaus Iohannis, with the important caveat that it is a long-term plan and Transnistria cannot form part of the deal.⁴⁴⁵ Even so, one would argue, this event would pose a significant challenge to both Romania's allies and Russia in terms of response and may further complicate NATO-Russian relations. What is clear is that Romania's commitment to the Republic of Moldova, based on their identity affinity and the portrayal of Moldova as an Estranged Other, far surpasses that of its allies. Perceptions over a Moldova under threat from Russia would require some type of response, but the military option is, both pragmatically and for reasons to do with Romania's anxieties over engaging Russia, unlikely. In this situation, unification would be a plausible and publically mandated course of action – at the moment around 70% of Romanians support it.⁴⁴⁶ It is clear, however, that Russia would view it as an attack on its sphere of influence and, equally, America would be unlikely to favour such a solution. This was made clear recently when the American ambassador to Chisinau expressed his opinion that unification between Romania and Moldova would not be practical or resolve Moldova's situation.⁴⁴⁷ In response, however, the Romanian Senate adopted an official reply which qualified the statement as "surprising and worrisome, as well as received with lack of satisfaction by public opinion in Romania."⁴⁴⁸ Overall, it is clear that it is in this issue more than any other that cracks may appear in Romanian-American relations.

What Russia's reaction may be to a Moldo-Romanian unification is difficult to predict – at the very least it could lead to a complete breakdown of diplomatic dialogue between Bucharest and Moscow. The fact that this scenario is even contemplated by Romania, meanwhile, tells us something of Romania's concerns over the future and

⁴⁴⁵ Iohannis, cited in F. Peia, 'Iohannis: O unire cu Basarabia este posibila, dar nu in viitorul apropiat [Iohannis: Unification with Bessarabia is Possible, but Not in the Near Future],' *Agerpres*, 09.11.2016. <http://www.agerpres.ro/politica/2016/11/09/iohannis-o-unire-cu-basarabia-este-posibila-dar-nu-in-viitorul-apropiat-21-11-10> [accessed 10 November 2016].

⁴⁴⁶ INSCOP, 'Barometru – Adevarul despre Romania: Republica Moldova [Barometer – The Truth about Romania: The Republic of Moldova],' July 2015, <http://www.inscop.ro/wp-content/uploads/2015/07/INSCOP-07.2015-Republica-Moldova.pdf> [accessed 23 December 2016].

⁴⁴⁷ A.M. Luca, 'Romanian Senate Adopts Official Reply to US Ambassador Pettit's Statements on Moldova,' *Agerpres – English Version*, 20.09.2016, <http://www.agerpres.ro/english/2016/09/20/romanian-senate-adopts-official-reply-to-us-ambassador-pettit-s-statements-on-moldova-13-07-00> [accessed 28 December 2016].

⁴⁴⁸ Ibid.

how it considers positioning itself vis-à-vis Russia. From this perspective, it is unlikely that the quality of Romanian-Russian relations will improve, but for a reverse of course by the Kremlin. A precipitation of the Ukrainian crisis, conversely, would pose a significant challenge to the stability and the security of the region, and Romania's response may augment the situation. In any case, it is clear that Bucharest's outlook is one concerned with satisfying the prerogative of state security, both of itself and the Republic of Moldova. In order to achieve this, one would argue that it will sacrifice its diplomatic relations with Russia and align itself with the hard-line approach pursued by NATO. Having said that, were the Republic of Moldova to come under direct physical threat, its own national interest, rooted in a sense of shared identity with the eastern neighbour, would potentially supersede its commitment to NATO. In this situation, all the relationships mentioned, between Romania and Russia, NATO and Russia and NATO and Romania, would come under severe strain and the repercussions of a unification of Romania and Moldova may further destabilise the fragile equilibrium which exists in Eastern Europe at the moment.

Conclusion

Overall, this chapter has explored the nature of Romania's relationship with Russia, from the perspective of Romania's national identity narrative. This approach sheds light on the manner in which entrenched portrayals of the Self and Russian Other have resulted in a widespread and enduring sense of anxiety, suspicion and fear concerning Russia's actions. Working from this angle, the manner in which these attitudes have influenced Russo-Romanian relations since 1989 becomes apparent. In terms of the main research question, they have fed into Romania's foreign policy agenda by setting distance from Moscow as a priority and close relations with it as a red-line. Russia continued to be seen as a threatening Other through the lens of the Besieged Fortress theme throughout transition and this accounts for the state's ambivalence in negotiating this relationship. Furthermore, recent developments both within the EU and in Ukraine have confirmed, in a sense, Romania's portrayal of Russia and have led to an augmentation of the threat perception over the prerogative of security not just of itself, but also of its Estranged Self, Moldova. Under the protective umbrella offered

by NATO, resistance, Romania's traditional reaction to the sense of besiegement, now takes a different form, that of a hard-line approach to curbing Russian expansionism. Romania's current pattern of behaviour towards Russia follows this particular rationale, one motivated by identity-based prerogatives and made possible by the state's strategic position. It is, in a sense, the exacerbation of identity-based anxieties that have made Romania assume a role of greater responsibility in the region and allowed it to find its footing within the EU and NATO. In this vein, the utility of studying the behaviour of a small state is revealed, as Romania has shown itself capable and willing to pursue its own goals, informed by its unique identity narrative. Having said that, being a state of strategic significance in an environment in fragile equilibrium means that Romania's relationship with Russia has a bearing on the whole and not just its constitutive parts. Whether a normalisation of relations is possible is contingent on the retreat of these identity-based anxieties and therefore rests on Russia's future behaviour and, of course, Romanians' perception of it. In any case, the security of the state and, as a corollary, that of the Republic of Moldova's, will likely continue to be the main identity-based prerogative motivating Romania's own actions towards Russia.

Chapter 6. Romania's Relationship with Hungary – Managing a Legacy of a Thousand Years of Conflict and Discord

*A true mother will never console herself with the dismemberment of a child, (...). For us Transylvania cannot exist but whole, part of our body. For others, she only represents historical ambitions or feudal castles built on the sweat of generations of Romanian slaves. For us she means everything: past, present, future or non-existence. We did not come from anywhere; we were begot, born and raised out of the Transylvanian land.*⁴⁴⁹

Introduction

This chapter analyses how enduring beliefs emerging from the Romanian identity narrative have influenced the state's behaviour towards its western neighbour, Hungary. Firstly, a section is dedicated to the manner in which the Hungarian Other has been portrayed within the identity narrative and how the historical narrative has reinforced the image of Hungary as an essential threat to the Romanian state. The argument is that the consistent and predominant representation of Hungary as a threat has resulted, similarly to Russia, in an attitude of distrust and anxiety, here over territorial integrity and sovereignty. This perception is augmented as Hungary is seen as both an external, but also internal Other, because of the significant Magyar minority in Transylvania. The following section covers Hungarian-Romanian relations during the transition period, with a focus on the difficulties of reaching agreement on a Principal Treaty. The challenges are argued to have been rooted in Romania's rejection of the notion of group rights for the Hungarian minority as much as in beliefs that any concessions to the Hungarian cause may lead to territorial revisionism, both of which are connected to the afore-mentioned identity anxieties. However, this section also addresses the improvement of Hungarian-Romanian relations in the aftermath of leadership changes in both states, which led to a retreat of anxieties and allowed for an unprecedented level of political and economic cooperation. In the background however, it is argued that traditional suspicions of Hungary endured at the societal

⁴⁴⁹ L. Rebreanu (1941, reprinted 1977), p.208.

level. Following on from this, the chapter discusses the current situation of relations between Bucharest and Budapest. It explores the influence of Viktor Orbán's new nationalist direction and eastern shift which are argued to have led to a re-emergence and augmentation of anxieties concerning Romania's territorial integrity and sovereignty. The relationship between the two states is revealed to have suffered significantly in this context, as doubts are raised over Hungary's respect of Romania's sovereignty, but also its commitment towards its Western allies. The theory of Trojan Horse Hungary, as a pro-Russian destabilising force within the EU and NATO is presented. The chapter ends with a prediction that bilateral relations between the two states are likely to continue to cool, as there is little indication that Budapest will change its foreign policy direction. Additionally, the potential repercussions of an Eastern-leaning Hungary in the context of an increasingly fragile equilibrium between pro-Russian and pro-Western attitudes within Europe is explored in reference to several scenarios being considered in Romania. The most worrying concerns the West's – and therefore Romania's – inability to counter Russia's attempts at expanding its sphere of influence as a result of internal discord and Hungary's potential benefits from such developments. The argument of this chapter is that profound beliefs about the nature of the Romanian Self and Hungarian Other are critical to understanding the relationship between the two actors, particularly in the current climate of uncertainty.

Romania's Identity Driven Attitude towards Hungary – Distrust and Anxiety over Territorial Integrity and Sovereignty

Much like Russia, Hungary occupies a specific place in the Romanian imaginary. Romania's behaviour towards its western neighbour is similarly informed by attitudes rooted in the portrayal of the Self and Other. Additionally, as a result of their historical interaction and the manner in which these have been translated in the identity narrative, both Hungary and Russia have emerged as essential threatening Others. However, there are some important differences between Russia and Hungary, both in terms of their status and their positioning vis-à-vis Romania. Firstly, Hungary is not a super-power. As Boia rightly points out: "she is painted as a great power – which, obviously, it is not – capable of surmounting Romania, two and a half times its size and

population.”⁴⁵⁰ In other words, one would not expect for Romania’s traditional anxiety rooted in its small-state condition to manifest in its relations with Hungary. Secondly, the perceived antagonism and conflict of interest with Russia over, for instance, the Republic of Moldova, should not apply in this second relationship, as Hungary’s post-socialist foreign policy direction has mirrored Romania’s own. Accession to the EU and NATO were Hungary’s primary goals also and the two are now partners and allies in the two organisations. It is nonetheless the case that Hungary is viewed as an “hereditary enemy.”⁴⁵¹

The identity perspective employed by this project may shed light on the reasons behind this perception. Specifically, one would argue they lie, firstly, in the continuity of the historical and identity narratives, which have led to the sedimentation of a particular image of the Hungarian Other. Equally important is the extent of Hungary’s involvement in the affairs of the Romanian provinces, and later, the Romanian state. What differentiates the portrayal of Hungary from that of Russia is the fact that the former plays a role in all the three major themes of the Romanian identity narrative. Hungary enters Romanian history at a formative stage of the three provinces, and their relationship is, from the very beginning, conflictual. As such the Foundation Myths are meant to emphasise the sharp contrast between Self and Hungarian Other, noticeable in the different origins of the two peoples – Latin versus non-European – their religious affiliation – born into Eastern Christianity versus Catholic converts – and, the dispute over their common habitus – the ownership of Transylvania. This last element, of course, feeds into the theme of the Besieged Fortress; as was explored in Chapter 3, during the Middle Ages Transylvanian Romanians were oppressed and denied political rights. In Transylvania, therefore, Romanians were subjugated and held captive in their own territory, victims of the expansionism of the more powerful Hungarian Other. Consequently, the region holds a symbolic significance in Hungarian-Romanian relations, as Dutceac-Segesten notes: “myths of territory such as Transylvania (...) are common in grand narratives of nations as places of sacred origin, where the virtues

⁴⁵⁰ Boia (2011) p.279.

⁴⁵¹ Ibid. p.255.

and purity of the national soul are safeguarded.”⁴⁵² This is precisely how the Romanian historical narrative has portrayed the situation of Transylvanian Romanians in their relation to the ruling Hungarians.

Even more importantly, the plight of Transylvania as an unjustly-occupied Romanian territory is extrapolated to the entire Romanian people within the theme of Unity. In modernity, Transylvania, alongside Bessarabia, becomes the keystone of the Romanian national project, and the perception that Romanians within these territories are persecuted and prevented from unifying does nothing but exacerbate the Self-Other contrast. When Transylvania finally joins Romania in the aftermath of the First World War – see [Figure 4], the grand unification is seen as a victory of Romanians against the more powerful Hungarian Other. However, the issue of ownership of Transylvania is yet unsettled, as Hungary occupied the north-west of the region in 1940 – see [Figure 5]. Although this territory was returned at the end of the Second World War, this cemented in Romanians the view that Transylvania remains a contested territory, and that Hungary represents an inherent threat to the physical integrity of the state. This explains the perpetuation of the image of Hungary along the same lines as before 1918. As Boia points out, despite the fact that Hungary is no longer a great power, “Transylvania (...) appears as an amorphous entity, susceptible to be extracted from the Romanian national ensemble.”⁴⁵³

The view that Hungary has been a conqueror and oppressor of the Romanian people is, therefore, historically enduring and widely accepted. Equally, the perception is that she has also been an obstacle to the achievement of unity and independence, the main identity-driven goal of the modern period. Finally, Hungary’s dominion over Transylvania has had another important consequence, which is the final facet of Romanian-Hungarian antagonism: a large Hungarian minority on Romanian territory. The fact that the Hungarian Other is both within and without Romania has had an impact on both the portrayal of the Self and of the Other. In regards to the former, as Fischer-Galati has pointed out, the role of the state was to provide “a territorial and

⁴⁵² Dutceac-Segesten (2011), p.183.

⁴⁵³ Boia (2011), p.279.

psychological framework” in which Romanians could “solve often insoluble and unsurmountable problems *en famille*.”⁴⁵⁴ In other words, the whole point of establishing a Romanian state was that it would be a nation-state, an instrument for the protection and development of the Romanian ethnic element. As a result, the Hungarian minority, as an Other, cannot but be treated with suspicion, as intruders into the national space, as Boia points out: the relationship between Romanians and Hungarians was characterised by “frustration and distrust. (...) They were all Romanian citizens, but the spiritual distinction between Romanians and others remained.”⁴⁵⁵ This view was only exacerbated during communism, when the emphasis on national unity and the exceptionalism of the Romanian character led, as has been previously explored, to a sharpening of the Self-Other contrast.

Overall, the historical and identity narrative have consistently portrayed the Hungarian Other as a threat to Romanians and, through many of its own actions, Hungary has confirmed and helped perpetuate this view. The perception that neither Hungarians within nor without the Romanian territory have renounced their right of ownership of Transylvania is at the root of the antagonism between the two states. In this Romanians feel both the unity and integrity of their state at risk. Additionally, the fact that the existence of a Hungarian minority within their borders offers Budapest a reason to interfere in the affairs of the Romanian state is also seen as a threat to its sovereignty, as has been explored in Chapter 4. All of these factors taken together explain why Hungary continues to occupy such an important place in the Romanian imaginary, through the lens of the Besieged Fortress. Ultimately, this image of Hungary has translated into a consistent attitude of distrust and suspicion towards the motivations behind this actor’s behaviour, and anxieties over the state’s ‘true’ intentions regarding Transylvania. This is evident at a societal level, where, as of March 2016, 54.3% of the population had negative feelings towards Hungary.⁴⁵⁶ As Boia argues, where Hungary is concerned, “extreme opinions reach mythical proportions and the intensity of a psychosis,”⁴⁵⁷ reflecting perceptions of Hungary as an existential

⁴⁵⁴ Fischer-Galati (1970), p.9.

⁴⁵⁵ Boia (2012), pp. 97-98.

⁴⁵⁶ INSCOP (March 2016).

⁴⁵⁷ Boia (2011), p.278.

threat to the Romanian state. Dutceac-Segesten meanwhile believes that dispute over Transylvania, or at least the perception of it, “makes almost impossible the presence of positive stories about cohabitation and gives birth to many stereotypes.”⁴⁵⁸

Although powerful anxieties do not remove the possibility of inter-state cooperation altogether, the following section will show that Romania’s behaviour towards Hungary, particularly in terms of sensitivity to its rhetoric and the connection it seeks to build with its diaspora, is profoundly influenced by these attitudes.

Hungarian-Romanian Relations During the Transition Period

As Chapter 4 has already pointed out, the transition period posed difficult challenges for Romania in terms of negotiating its communist past as well as its regime and population’s general resistance to change. It is in this context that relations between Bucharest and Budapest during this time should be understood. Specifically, rapprochement between the two states had to be achieved against the backdrop of decades of nationalist propaganda and a narrative on identity which emphasised Romanian exceptionalism and the theme of Unity. From this, we have seen, was born a policy of assimilation of and/or discrimination against the Hungarian minority which alienated the community from the majority of the population. Although Hungary had few avenues to influence Romanian domestic affairs during the Cold War, by the late 1980s the issue had emerged as a prominent discussion topic, “with criticism towards Ceausescu’s regime becom[ing] frequent and more importantly public in Hungary.”⁴⁵⁹ It was evident that in the aftermath of the revolution, the minority question would become a contention point between the two states.

Identity-driven attitudes, both in what concerns the portrayal of the Self and Other, played a major part in the debate over the minority question. Hungarians were asking for a complete reversal of the assimilation policy and the legislating on basic collective rights protecting their cultural connection to Hungary, but also guarantees that, as Hungarian ethnics, they would be integrated into Romanian society. Some of these propositions did not represent an issue – the government was quick to allow for seats

⁴⁵⁸ Dutceac-Segesten (2011), p.223.

⁴⁵⁹ Kulcsar and Bradatan (2007), p.303.

in the lower chamber of parliament to be awarded to minority groups, Hungarians included.⁴⁶⁰ Indeed negotiation on a resolution of the minority question were conducted with the Democratic Union of Hungarians in Romania (UDMR,) the community's official political platform. For Romanians, however, there exists a very important distinction between political integration and allowing for the proliferation of Hungarian cultural elements within its national territory. As Gallagher argued, the "political agenda of minority rights and cultural autonomy challenges some of the core values of the Romanian state."⁴⁶¹ Issues arose when Hungarians made demands including for the establishment of a Hungarian consulate in the city of Cluj (Transylvania), Hungarian-language universities and cultural centres with books and other resources in the mother tongue.⁴⁶² The values under threat here concern the view that Romania was a national state, with a single official language (Romanian), and in which no discrimination on basis of ethnicity was permissible. In this case, it was thought that official minority group rights would discriminate against the majority of the population, as discussed in Chapter 4. Therefore, several principles on the UDMR's agenda, such as "the recognition of Hungarian minority as a 'constitutive factor' of the Romanian state as well as being an 'independent political subject'"⁴⁶³ were made impossible.

Behind these worries, however, was the ever-present question regarding Transylvania. The perception was that any conversation on enhanced rights for the Hungarian minority would lead to compromises on territorial autonomy, and eventually the breakup of the state: "some Romanian politicians maintained that the discussion on minority rights was a pretext for territorial revisionism."⁴⁶⁴ The anxiety over making concessions on autonomy, whether cultural or political, is summarised well by Turnock: "Hungarians everywhere have an understandable sense of nostalgia for the territorial arrangements pre-1918 which Romanians can scarcely acknowledge as a historical fact for fear of offering some concessions over sovereignty."⁴⁶⁵ The issue is

⁴⁶⁰ Roper (2000), pp. 113-114.

⁴⁶¹ Gallagher (1998), p.115.

⁴⁶² Roper (2000), p.114.

⁴⁶³ Kulcsar and Bradatan (2007), p.307.

⁴⁶⁴ Roper (2000), p.116.

⁴⁶⁵ Turnock (2001), p.122.

that the minority question concerned not only Hungarians within Romania, but also their kin-state. The perception that Hungary had not altogether renounced its claim over Transylvania, coupled with the demands of the Hungarian minority, led many to believe that there was a concerted effort by this Other to undermine Romanian sovereignty and threaten its territorial integrity. As Dragoman argued: “the Hungarian community was largely suspected of disloyalty and even of plotting Transylvania’s secession.”⁴⁶⁶ The obvious connection between the political arm of the Hungarian community, the UDMR, and Budapest was also recognised, as the latter had been established with “financial help from Hungary.”⁴⁶⁷ Add to this the fact that Hungary’s right-wing prime-minister Jozsef Antall stated his desire to be the leader of fifteen million Hungarians ‘in spirit,’ five of whom were in the diaspora,⁴⁶⁸ it is apparent why Romanians made the leap from cultural rights to territorial dismemberment. Overall, the official position was that the minority issue was “purely a domestic issue”⁴⁶⁹ and Hungary’s involvement in the matter was especially undesirable. At the root of this stance were undoubtedly anxieties emerging from the theme of Besieged Fortress, concerning Hungary’s interference in its domestic affairs, and the threat it posed to Romania’s territorial integrity and sovereignty.

However, not least due to the pressures exerted on the two states by the international community to resolve the issue and sign a Principal Treaty, Bucharest sat down to discuss with its traditional foe a problem concerning what it perceived to be in the domestic sphere. Negotiations began in 1994, with Romania’s position on the unconstitutionality of group rights remaining unchanged since, as Turnock argues, “nationalists (...) do not understand how charges of discrimination can arise from legislation that applies equally to all Romanian citizens.”⁴⁷⁰ For its part, Hungary focused on a certain article 11 of the Council of Europe Recommendation 1201. This provision stated that “in areas where they are a majority, ethnic minorities should have ‘at their disposal appropriate local or autonomous authorities or ... have a special

⁴⁶⁶ Dragoman (2008), p.69.

⁴⁶⁷ Kulcsar and Bradatan (2007), p.303.

⁴⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁶⁹ Roper (2000), p.116.

⁴⁷⁰ Turnock (2001), p.122.

status matching the specific historical and territorial situation.”⁴⁷¹ In other words, the Hungarian minority in Romania would be allowed a certain degree of self-governance and preponderance in areas of Transylvania where they are in majority. Unsurprisingly, accepting that such an article be included in the Treaty was seen as encouraging Hungarians’ claims for political and administrative autonomy, pursued in parallel by the UDMR. For Romanians, the perception was that this would have been a slippery slope towards the disintegration of their state and, amidst broad political opposition to inclusion of this article in the Treaty, negotiations fell through in 1995. As Kulcsar and Bradatan point out, what made reaching consensus on a Treaty so difficult was “Romanian elites’ fixation that autonomy of any kind (and especially territorial/administrative) will eventually lead to secession.”⁴⁷²

Whether this anxiety is justified or not, it forms the primary rationale which guides Romania’s relations with both its Hungarian community and their state of origin. The areas of territorial integrity, of the national character of the state and its sovereignty, threatened here both from within – autonomy for minorities – and without – Hungary’s involvement in the issue – are of extreme sensitivity for the political class and the wider public. Salat captures this in the form of a telling statistic from 2006, that “the idea of ethnic autonomy is supported by 85% of the Hungarians in Transylvania, [whilst] only 13% of the Romanian segment of the Transylvanian population is ready to accept this arrangement.”⁴⁷³ The same split is noticeable on other issues such as education in the mother tongue, support from the Hungarian government, and the use of Hungarian as an official language of communication in state institutions.⁴⁷⁴ Consequently, the attitude of the public matches that of its leadership, in that making concessions to the Hungarian cause constitutes a red-line, the crossing of which may threaten the essential values on which the Romanian state is built.

⁴⁷¹ Roper (2000), p.119.

⁴⁷² Kulcsar and Bradatan (2007), p.307.

⁴⁷³ L. Salat, ‘A Rapprochement without Reconciliation: Romanian-Hungarian Relations in the Post-Communist Era,’ in A.E.B. Blomqvist, C. Iordachi B. Trencsenyi (eds.), *Hungary and Romania Beyond National Narratives – Comparisons and Enlargements* (Bern: Peter Lang, 2013), p.683.

⁴⁷⁴ Ibid.

These attitudes notwithstanding, Romanians and Hungarians went back to the negotiation table in 1996, this time with the more moderate Constantinescu and Gyula Horn at the helm. Constantinescu's government was much more amenable to reaching agreement with Hungary, as it would have been beneficial towards Romania's European integration prospects. Having said that, even this leadership could not ignore the anxieties of the general public, nor those of the socialist opposition. As such, whilst Romania acquiesced to Recommendation 1201, it pushed for a clause "that confirmed the 'inviolability of their common border and the territorial integrity of the other Party.'"⁴⁷⁵ Additionally, the Treaty specifies that the Recommendation "does not refer to collective rights, nor does it obligate Parties to grant those persons the right to a special territorial autonomy status based on ethnic criteria."⁴⁷⁶ In other words, Romania accepted that a certain 'special status' may be offered to Hungarians in areas in which they formed the majority, but this was not to be confused with institutionalised groups rights. Furthermore, the Romanian state incurred no responsibility to grant autonomy on the basis of this special status. Even more poignantly, the recognition of borders as inviolable would have been tantamount, for Romania, to an admission that Transylvania belongs in Romania and, therefore, a renunciation of Hungary's ownership of it. However, this compromise did not please either the nationalists or the UDMR; both denounced it, presumably not for the same reasons.⁴⁷⁷

Nonetheless, this first step signalled a change in tactic by Romania in its handling of the minority question – although collective rights have never been formalised, concessions began to be made. An example of this is the fact that in 1997, Hungarians were given the right to be schooled in their mother tongue, as well as to use their language in courts of law and at local administration level.⁴⁷⁸ Overall, after the signing of this Treaty, the minority question, at least in terms of its international ramifications, receded in salience, despite the fact that the UDMR still campaigns for greater territorial autonomy for the Hungarian community. Furthermore, the trend that, after

⁴⁷⁵ Roper (2000), p.121.

⁴⁷⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁷⁸ Gallagher (1998), p.115.

Constantinescu's coming to power, the accession process takes precedence over other identity-related goals holds in this case. It would seem as though a remarkable *détente* happened in the aftermath of the Principal Treaty, which saw a retreat of the identitary anxieties regarding the Hungarian threat to Romanian integrity and sovereignty. Attempts were made at building this relationship according to completely different reference points than those of their historical interaction. As Salat points out, thus began "a chapter of co-operation unprecedented in the history of the two states" with "various forms of dialogue and consultation (...) subsequently institutionalised, including regular joint meetings of the two governments and consultations of the presidents of the two parliaments."⁴⁷⁹ Examples of institutionalised cooperation are an Intergovernmental Mixed Commission on Collaboration and Strategic Partnership (1997), a Mixed Commission on Environmental Protection (1997), and even a joint Hungarian-Romanian Battalion established in 1998.⁴⁸⁰ More important, perhaps, was the establishment of a Euro-region covering Hungary, Romania and Serbia which "encourages greater permeability on the western frontier and reverses the xenophobic nationalist view of cross-border cooperation as a launching pad for Hungarian imperialism."⁴⁸¹

Having said that, the argument of this thesis is that, whilst changes to the international environment, in this case the presence in Hungary of a moderate government led by the socialist Gyula Horn, may result in a retreat of identity-related anxieties, it is not the case that these attitudes disappear altogether. Instead, distrust and suspicion of Hungary are powerful dispositions which draw on enduring claims about Romanian identity and, as such, could not have been written off by a temporary amelioration of their relationship. Similarly, on the other side, Hungarians' concerns regarding their minority in Romania, although put on the backburner by the socialist government,

⁴⁷⁹ L. Salat (2013), p.655.

⁴⁸⁰ Romanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs – Romanian Embassy in Hungary, *Relatii Bilaterale – Relatii Politice [Bilateral Relations – Political Relations]*, [n.d.], <http://budapesta.mae.ro/node/167> [accessed 02.01.2017].

⁴⁸¹ Turnock (2001), p.129.

remained an issue of contention, especially for the conservative opposition party, FIDESZ.⁴⁸² As Salat argues,

The rapprochement at the interstate level did not manage (...) to generate a new narrative capable of giving up the old grievances belonging to the past. Beyond the façade of the outstanding intergovernmental co-operation, the public discourse in the two countries remained dominated by patterns of mutual mistrust and prejudice, the dominant identity structures are still conflicting (...).⁴⁸³

In other words, while on the surface progress had been achieved, the fundamental internal tensions endured and all that was needed for the re-emergence of the traditional antagonism between the states was a change in the political scenery. That came to pass in 1998, when the Hungarian Socialists were defeated in the national elections by the right-wing FIDESZ, led by the nationalist Viktor Orban. The influence of this single individual in the present (and quite probably future) interaction between Romania and Hungary cannot be overstated. In his two spells in government – 1998-2002 and 2010 onwards – Orban has pushed for an agenda which has increasingly been striking at the heart of Romanian anxieties concerning Hungary. A shift in both rhetoric and behaviour towards radical nationalism and a pro-Russian attitude have led to a reactivation of the theme of Besieged Fortress in regards to Hungary, and frustrated relations between Bucharest and Budapest beyond an acceptable limit for states which are not only neighbours, but partners within the EU and NATO.

Orban has been described as a “gifted, popular strongman” but also as “restless and combative with leanings towards megalomania.”⁴⁸⁴ During his first government, cooperation between Romania and Hungary continued, particularly as Bucharest saw this partnership as the “the core of the process of consolidating security in the region of south east Europe, acting as a link in the Euro-Atlantic security architecture of which

⁴⁸² Kulcsar and Bradatan (2007), p.308.

⁴⁸³ Salat (2013), p.655.

⁴⁸⁴ I. Traynor, ‘Budapest Autumn? Hollowing out Democracy on the Edge of Europe: Premier Viktor Orban is Blowing a Chill Wind of Change through Hungary,’ *The Guardian* 30.10.2014, available from ProQuest, <http://ezproxy.lib.le.ac.uk/login?url=http://search.proquest.com/docview/1621309093?accountid=7420> [accessed 16 March 2016].

Hungary [was] now a member,”⁴⁸⁵ as of 1999 when it joined NATO. The tide, however, was changing. Orban’s nationalist orientation, which featured a conception of the nation as not being constrained by the borders of the modern Hungarian state, became the cornerstone of this new government’s policy agenda both domestically and internationally. As sociologist Bozoki argues, this extra-territorial national unification forms one of the pillars of Orban’s ‘new politics.’⁴⁸⁶ To that end, the Hungarian government has pursued an agenda aimed at undoing the damage of the Treaty of Trianon (1920) and bringing together the Hungarians within and without the state, in a modern version of Greater Hungary. The most problematic of Orban’s policies during transition was the Status Law (2002), which was “designed to give certain rights in the kin country to minority Hungarians abroad.”⁴⁸⁷ Benefits included seasonal working permits, travel and education benefits, social security provisions and health benefits.”⁴⁸⁸

Working at the intersection of FPA and SC from an identity-based perspective offers insight into Romania’s perceptions of this Other’s actions as essentially threatening. As the state with the largest Hungarian population in the region, for Romania this law “conjur[ed] up (...) the spectre of irredentism.”⁴⁸⁹ Despite the fact that the Status Law was (one would suspect intentionally) non-political, focusing instead on socio-cultural and educational rights, the extraterritoriality aspect inherent in its scope – namely the award of certain benefits with effect in the kin-state to a specific category of citizens of another state – was intensely problematic. Not only did the Status Law allow Hungary to become directly involved in the lives of Romanian citizens, building links between them and a foreign state, but, by setting apart the Hungarian minority from the rest of the population, it resulted into “discrimination among Romanian citizens based on ethnicity.”⁴⁹⁰ It had been precisely for this reason (or pretext) that Romania had

⁴⁸⁵ Turnock (2001), p.131.

⁴⁸⁶ Bozoki, cited in A. Deak, ‘Hungarian Dances – the Origins and the Future of Viktor Orban’s Revolution,’ *Lithuanian Annual Strategic Review* 11:1 (January 2013), p.153.

⁴⁸⁷ Specifically concerning minorities in Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Croatia, Serbia and the Ukraine.

⁴⁸⁸ Kulcsar and Bradatan (2007), p.309.

⁴⁸⁹ The Economist, *Viktor Orban, an Assertive Hungarian; Charlemagne*, 02.03.2002, available from Expanded Academic ASAP, <http://go.galegroup.com/ps/i.do?id=GALE%7CA83561677&v=2.1&u=leicester&it=r&p=EAIM&sw=w&asid=3021d7995063e2094a889236f980fcb7> [accessed 16 March 2016].

⁴⁹⁰ Kulcsar and Bradatan (2007), p.309.

refused to grant minority group rights to the Hungarian minority in the 1990s, but now Hungary was unilaterally embarking upon an agenda which ultimately achieved a similar goal by different means. Despite regional opposition, the law was eventually passed with an overwhelming majority by the Hungarian parliament, resulting in an increasingly close link between the Hungarian state and its diaspora in neighbouring states.

For Romanians, meanwhile, the ‘spectre of irredentism’ was quickly becoming a certainty, as the old identitary anxieties and suspicions towards Hungary’s intentions and motivations behind the Status Law were coming back to the fore:

The ratification of the ‘Status Law’ by the Hungarian government produced a powerful negative public opinion reaction (...). In this context, Hungary was accused that, while the ‘Status Law’ does not explicitly stipulate the annexation of Transylvania (...) and the reconstitution of Greater Hungary, the manner in which the law was adopted spoke to this Hungarian desideratum.⁴⁹¹

In other words, Romanians (as well as Slovaks, Ukrainians, Serbs, etc.) were naturally sceptical of Orban’s rhetoric, specifically his insistence on the notion that his modern post-state conception of the nation demanded only a “spiritual and cultural reunification of the Hungarian people,”⁴⁹² rather than a political/physical one. Romanians, however, have a radically different understanding of nation/statehood. As Dragoman has argued, “Romanians will see themselves as members of a nation and of a nation-state. It is, therefore, difficult for them to conceive a limitation of the national sovereignty.”⁴⁹³ As such, any Hungarian argument that seeks to down-play the significance of borders or, indeed, the overall relevance of the nation-state in contemporary politics will be seen as a direct challenge to Romania’s sovereignty and its physical integrity. Coupled with his emphasis on the symbolic ‘Greater Hungary’ and other measures such as “setting the Trianon Mourning Day,”⁴⁹⁴ Orban’s agenda did

⁴⁹¹ R.M. Vadean, *Relatiile romano-ungare in contextul integrarii in structurile europeene si euroatlantice – 1989-2010 [Romanian-Hungarian Relations in the Context of European and Euro-Atlantic Integration – 1989-2010]* (Iasi: Lumen, 2011), p.110.

⁴⁹² Orban cited in *The Economist* (2002).

⁴⁹³ Dragoman (2008), p.74.

⁴⁹⁴ Deak (2013), p.154.

little but reactivate Romanians' anxieties concerning Hungary's interest, not only in the welfare of its minority in Romania, but also in renewing its claim over Transylvania.

It is telling of the impact that Orban and his FIDESZ have on Romanian-Hungarian relations, that, once he lost his mandate to the Socialists in 2002, contact between the two countries improved significantly. Over the last half decade of transition, the relationship between Bucharest and Budapest regained some of the impetus of the late 1990s. Starting with 2005, for instance, there were four joined annual sessions of the two governments and, beginning in 2006, also four annual meetings of the intergovernmental Mixed Commission on Economic Collaboration.⁴⁹⁵ Rather poignantly, neither of these meetings took place after FIDESZ came back into power in 2010. This therefore confirms the assumptions of the thesis, concerning the retreat and re-emergence of identity anxieties in specific contexts. Whilst the dominant portrayal of Hungary as a danger is perpetuated in the historical and identity narratives, the attitude of anxiety towards its actions and intentions can, to a large degree, be alleviated by perceptions of a sustained, positive and non-threatening behaviour such as that exhibited by Budapest in the periods when socialists were in power. On the other hand, the theme of Besieged Fortress comes back to the fore, as anxieties are reactivated and augmented, when perceptions over this Other's intentions are reversed by a change in direction and rhetoric towards a nationalist agenda, witnessed during Antall and, later, Orban's mandates. Perhaps precisely because Romania keeps a close eye on developments in Budapest, itself a sign of distrust, it has been acutely aware of these shifts in Budapest's outlook, and as will be explored in the following section, has reacted to them by altering its behaviour towards its western neighbour considerably.

Contemporary Hungarian-Romanian Relations

Romania joined NATO in 2004 and the EU in 2007; Hungary beat Romania by five years in achieving membership of the former, and three years for the latter. In a sense, the fact that Romania lagged behind Hungary and the other Central European states in

⁴⁹⁵ Romanian Embassy to Budapest (date unknown).

fulfilling the accession criteria may actually have contributed to the cooperation of the 2000s. A possible explanation for this bettering of relationships was Hungary's own pro-Western direction. In other words, the perception that, inherent in its desire and ultimate success of integrating in the Euro-Atlantic structures, was a commitment by Hungary to respect the values of these organisations. One would argue that, for Romania, the inviolability of borders within the EU and the mutual protection offered by Article 5 of the NATO Treaty on collective defence⁴⁹⁶ offered the prospect that Hungary could never again constitute a threat to its territorial integrity. From this perspective, EU and NATO membership provided two benefits – it moved Romania out of the East, eliminating the threat posed by Russia, and made Hungary its formal ally, thereby making it nigh-on impossible for Transylvania to re-emerge as a contested issue.

However, if rapprochement was noticeable at the level of bilateral relations, there exist signs at societal level that the public's feelings towards the Hungarian minority endured. According to Salat, a study of 2006 revealed that young Romanians (15-25 years old) "consider that Hungarians in Romania have too many rights," despite the lack of formal group rights, "they are disturbed by the fact that the Hungarian language is spoken in public, and they firmly reject the idea of autonomy."⁴⁹⁷ It would seem as though the fundamental issues between Romanians and Hungarians concerning the threat of the latter to the national character of the state continued amidst increased bilateral cooperation. Distrust, therefore, remained a characteristic of Romanians' relation to Hungarians, and it is against this backdrop that one should assess current Romanian-Hungarian interaction.

That is all the more the case as Orban's second spell as prime-minister, which began in 2010 and continues to the time of writing, has seen an even sharper shift in Hungary's rhetoric and behaviour than his first, which has resulted in an augmenting of threat perceptions regarding Hungary through the lens of the Besieged Fortress theme. Firstly, the pronounced nationalist discourse that in the 1998-2002 period emphasised

⁴⁹⁶ NATO, *The North Atlantic Treaty*, 04.04.1949, http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/official_texts_17120.htm [accessed 06 April 2016].

⁴⁹⁷ Salat (2013), p.684.

the spiritual unification of the Hungarian nation symbolised in the Status Law was now offered a political dimension. In 2010, the Dual Citizenship Law was passed, which stipulated that citizenship was to be granted expeditiously to Hungarians living abroad, provided that their “origin from Hungary is probable” and their “Hungarian knowledge is proven.”⁴⁹⁸ Furthermore, for this accelerated process of awarding citizenship “neither residence or subsistence in Hungary, nor a test on knowledge of the constitution [was] required.”⁴⁹⁹ As a result, the law paved the way for millions of Hungarian ethnics living in neighbouring countries to receive a Hungarian passport – indeed by 2016, according to *Agerpres*, around 785.000 people had taken advantage of this loosening of the citizenship law, half of whom were reported to have been Romanian.⁵⁰⁰ Perhaps surprisingly at first glance, the backlash against the Dual Citizenship law was fairly subdued in Romania, with the vast majority of the political leadership remaining quiet on the matter. Certainly, the reaction did not compare in intensity with the one in Slovakia – where the government took the decision to “revoke Slovak citizenship for anyone who acquire it of another state,”⁵⁰¹ a measure clearly aimed at dissuading the over half a million of their own eligible citizens from applying for Hungarian citizenship.

The assumptions made by this project regarding Romanian anxieties over retaining sovereignty and the national character of the state may, at first, seem challenged by Romania’s reaction to this law. This is especially the case as Romania is home to the largest Hungarian population outside of the kin-state and the rhetoric surrounding the Dual Citizenship Law was laden with mentions of due ‘reparations over the painful

⁴⁹⁸ J. Toth, ‘Update: Changes in the Hungarian Citizenship Law and Adopted on 26 May 2010,’ *European Union Democracy Observatory*, 19.07.2010, <http://eudo-citizenship.eu/docs/CountryReports/recentChanges/Hungary.pdf> [accessed 24.03.2016], p.2.

⁴⁹⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰⁰ G. Stefan, ‘CNMT: Peste 785.000 de maghiari din afara granitelor au solicitat cetatenia ungara; jumătate sunt din Romania [Over 785.000 Hungarians from abroad have applied for Hungarian Citizenship; Half Come from Romania,’ *Agerpres* 03.02.2016 <http://www.agerpres.ro/politica/2016/02/03/cnmt-pest-785-000-de-maghiari-din-afara-granitelor-au-solicitat-cetatenia-ungara-jumatate-sunt-din-romania-14-28-44> [accessed 24.03.2016].

⁵⁰¹ J.R. Haines, ‘Hungary: Going in the Wrong Direction? Viktor Orban’s ‘Illiberal’ Hungary Looks Eastward,’ *Foreign Policy Research Institutes*, E-Notes, September 2014, <http://www.fpri.org/article/2014/09/hungary-going-in-the-wrong-direction/> [accessed 09.03.2016].

injustices of Trianon.⁵⁰² One would expect that Romania must have perceived this behaviour as threatening to its state integrity and sovereignty, yet, unlike Slovakia, it kept silent. The reason behind this seemingly peculiar behaviour, one would argue, was the fact Romania had, itself, only recently passed similar legislation concerning the Republic of Moldova (2009), under which the state offered Moldovans of Romanian ethnicity Romanian, and therefore EU, citizenship and passports. From this perspective, speaking against Hungary's Dual Citizenship Law would have been tantamount to opening Romania to criticism against its own policy of building a stronger connection to the Republic of Moldova. What one sees in Romania's behaviour, therefore, is an ordering of priorities – Romania's desire to strengthen links with its diaspora in Moldova trumped the threat inherent in Hungary's course of action. However, by reacting in this way – or, rather, not reacting – to Hungary's policy, Romania was giving Viktor Orbán and FIDESZ a stake in its domestic policy and a political platform in the Magyar dominated areas of Transylvania, as Hungarian ethnics became Hungarian citizens.

This has resulted in some rather odd situations over the last few years, which have led to a cooling of Romanian-Hungarian relations, one of them in direct consequence of the extension of voting rights in Hungarian elections through the Citizenship Law to the diaspora in Transylvania. The far-right nationalists Jobbik ran part of their 2014 parliamentary elections campaign in Romania, with people in several counties in Transylvania receiving leaflets on Jobbik events, and which encouraged them "to take part in the elections in Hungary, as decisions taken in Budapest would influence the fate of Magyars in Transylvania."⁵⁰³ This was a step too far for Romanians, who recognised that the message and sheer presence of the radical nationalists Jobbik were bound to reignite the dispute over the status of the Hungarian minority in

⁵⁰² M. Picard, 'Budapest offre la nationalité hongroise aux magyars [Budapest Offers Magyars Hungarian Nationality],' *Le Figaro* 18.05.2010, <http://www.lefigaro.fr/international/2010/05/18/01003-20100518ARTFIG00637-budapest-offre-la-nationalite-hongroise-aux-magyars.php> [accessed 29 March 2016].

⁵⁰³ D. Pacala, 'Jobbik isi face campanie electorala in Covasna, Harghita, Mures si Brasov [Jobbik Is Running its Electoral Campaign in Covasna, Harghita, Mures and Brasov],' *Mediafax*, 12.03.2014, <http://www.mediafax.ro/politic/jobbik-isi-face-campanie-electorala-in-covasna-harghita-mures-si-brasov-12250448> [accessed 29 March 2016].

Romania. President Basescu qualified Jobbik as ‘extremist’⁵⁰⁴ and warned that Bucharest would take action against active threats against its security and stability: “our objective is that Hungarian politicians do not utilise electoral campaigns in order to make statements which contravene the Romanian Constitution, the rule of law and the [reasonable] behaviour of a guest whilst in foreign territory.”⁵⁰⁵

It is apparent, one would argue, what particular articles of the Constitution Basescu is referring to – there is no room for Hungarian radical nationalism in the ‘national, unitary and indivisible’ state of Romania, and any such message will be seen as an attack on Romanian sovereignty and its national prerogatives. Consequently, the Ministry of Internal Affairs announced that Jobbik campaigners would formally be declared *personae non gratae* and banned from entering Romanian territory, so as to “pre-empt any events which may affect public order or national security.”⁵⁰⁶ It becomes apparent that, while dual citizenship for Romanian Magyars was a concession Romania felt obliged to make, a limit had to be drawn concerning the level of involvement of Hungarian organisations in the affairs of the state and its citizens. It is clear that, as the formal connection between the Hungarian minority and its kin-state has strengthened, Romania has increasingly become more sensitive to, and less tolerant towards, any perceived attempts by Hungary to interfere in the minority question.

Beyond Jobbik’s involvement in the election campaign, Orban’s own behaviour has led to a strain in relations between Bucharest and Budapest. In particular, the discourse on the irrelevance of national borders as an obstacle to Hungarian unity has translated into actions which have amplified Romania’s interpretations of Budapest’s behaviour as irredentist. Perhaps the best illustration of these heightened tensions is an event

⁵⁰⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁰⁵ Basescu, cited in V. Anghel, ‘MAI: S-a decis INTERZICEREA intrarii in tara a unor cetateni ungari din Jobbik si alte trei formatiuni [MIA: It Has Been Decided that Certain Hungarian Citizens from Jobbik and Three Other Organisations Are to Be BANNED from Entering the Country],’ Mediafax, 14.03.2014, <http://www.mediafax.ro/social/mai-s-a-decis-interzicerea-intrarii-in-tara-a-unor-cetateni-ungari-din-jobbik-si-alte-trei-formatiuni-12266590> [accessed 29 March 2016].

⁵⁰⁶ Romanian Ministry of Internal Affairs, *Declaratie de presa a purtatorului de cuvnt al M.A.I. [Press Briefing by the M.I.A. Official Spokesperson]*, 14.03.2014, http://www.comunicare.mai.gov.ro/arhiva.php?subaction=showfull&id=1394818102&archive=1395902350&start_from=&ucat=9& [accessed 30 March 2016].

which took place in 2015. After a visit to a Hungarian summer university in the Romanian town of Baile Tusnad, Orban posted a series of photographs of insignias featuring maps of Greater Hungary and the so-called Szeklerland,⁵⁰⁷ a geographic unit unrecognised by Bucharest.⁵⁰⁸ This prompted an energetic and forceful reaction from Bucharest, with the official statement from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs also coming via Facebook:

The promotion, by the Hungarian prime-minister, of these revisionist symbols, completely unacceptable and contrary to the (...) [Principal Treaty] of 1996, (...) and the constitutional order in Romania, does not by any means contribute to the 'streamlining' of Hungarian-Romanian relations or the establishment of a climate of trust (...). *As long as the Hungarian party does not prove, beyond doubt, that it is willing to abide by the political-juridical parameters agreed upon by both Romania and Hungary in the aforementioned documents, the bilateral relationship will not become balanced or built on mutual trust.*⁵⁰⁹

In this one can see the coming to the fore of Romanian anxieties concerning Hungary's true motivations for action through the lens of Besieged Fortress. The mention of the Principal Treaty is not by coincidence, as this recognised the inviolability of Romania's borders by Hungary. Through his post, but also his policies and rhetoric, Viktor Orban is perceived to renege on Hungary's commitment to respect Romania's territorial configuration and sovereignty. From this perspective, no meaningful level of trust can exist between the Romanian and Hungarian sides. As a result, unless Hungary changes direction, the Ministry's post suggests, the relationship between the two countries will remain imbalanced and marked by suspicion and distrust. More importantly, the reaction from Romania's leadership is one in tune with the general feelings of the population. In November 2015, a national survey showed that 17% of Romanians see

⁵⁰⁷ Mediafax, *Viktor Orban a postat imagini cu simboluri ale 'Ungariei mari' si 'Tinutului Secuiesc'* [Viktor Orban Has Posted Pictures with Symbols of 'Greater Hungary' and 'Szeklerland'], 26.07.2015, <http://www.mediafax.ro/politic/viktor-orban-a-postat-imagini-cu-simboluri-ale-ungariei-mari-si-tinutului-secuiesc-reactia-mae-foto-14641262> [accessed 30 July 2015].

⁵⁰⁸ Szeklerland is the territorial unit where the majority of the Hungarian community is concentrated. Most initiatives regarding autonomy and secession of the Magyar minority focus on this region.

⁵⁰⁹ Romanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, *Statement Concerning Viktor Orban*, delivered on Facebook 26 July 2015, <https://www.facebook.com/mae.romania/?fref=nf> [accessed 31 March 2016]. The emphasis is the author's own.

Hungary as their greatest enemy, with only Russia scoring a higher score (35%).⁵¹⁰ What is seen here is a reactivation of the old anxieties of the Besieged Fortress, and a response from Romania which conforms to these perceptions. Interventions of this type are another identity red-line, and an aggressive response is the only legitimate course of action in countering Hungary's irredentism. This position was expressed by former prime-minister Victor Ponta who said that "Viktor Orban complimented me, he told me he had had a great relationship with the Romanian government until 2012 [i.e. the year Ponta became prime-minister], and afterwards he did not," adding that "Romanians will not accept a government which would maintain good relations with Viktor Orban."⁵¹¹

From this point on, although formal cooperation within the EU and NATO continued, one would argue that relations between Romania and Hungary cooled significantly. These were but a couple of examples of bilateral skirmishes which hint at the rift building between the two states. Furthermore, this trend has been exacerbated by Hungary's eastern shift in its general foreign policy direction, the second dimension which should be discussed. Specifically, certain elements of Orban's rhetoric and behaviour have cast doubt over Hungary's commitment to the Euro-Atlantic alliances it is a member of. The view is that Orban has "transformed the country in ways that [are] in conflict with many of the EU's core values."⁵¹² Particularly, Hungary seems to be loosening ties with its Western partners in favour of closer links with the East, particularly Putin's Russia. As a member of the EU, Hungary vocally opposed the economic sanctions levied against Russia, and, in 2014, struck a deal allegedly worth ten billion euros⁵¹³ with Moscow to expand the nuclear power plant at Paks. Whilst

⁵¹⁰ M. Mihalache, 'Sondaj IRES: Rusia, considerate cel mai mare dusman al Romaniei' ['IRES Poll: Russia, Seen as Romania's Greatest Enemy'], *Adevarul*, 27.11.2015, http://adevarul.ro/news/politica/sondaj-ires-rusia-considerata-mai-mare-dusman-romaniei-cunosc-romanii-despre-produsele-rusesti-1_565889827d919ed50ea6bf8d/index.html [accessed 24 December 2015].

⁵¹¹ Ponta, cited in A. Moise, 'Ponta: Orban mi-a facut un compliment cand a zis ca pana in 2012 s-a inteles foarte bine cu Romania [Ponta: Orban Complimented Me when He Said That, until 2012, He Had Good Relations with Romania]', *Mediafax*, 27.07.2015, <http://www.mediafax.ro/politic/ponta-orban-mi-a-facut-un-compliment-cand-a-zis-ca-pana-in-2012-s-a-inteles-foarte-bine-cu-romania-14646464> [accessed 30 July 2015].

⁵¹² K. Verseck, 'Hungary Eyes Closer Ties with Russia,' *Deutsche Welle*, 02.02.2015, <http://www.dw.com/en/hungary-eyes-closer-ties-with-russia/a-18230319?maca=en-rss-en-eu-2092-rdf> [accessed 05 April 2016].

⁵¹³ *Ibid.*

economic dependence on Russian energy of several EU member states, Germany included, has been the major impediment in Europe's adopting a strong stance against Russia's recent actions, Hungary has added a dogmatic dimension to its reasons for resisting the embargo.

During a speech at the 2014 Hungarian summer university in Baile Tusnad, where, one year later, he would take the now infamous 'Greater Hungary' photos, Orban questioned the contemporary relevance of the Western liberal model and its capacity to remain competitive in a globalised world. The suggestion was that it is systems such as those in China, Turkey and Russia, "that are not Western, not liberal, not liberal democracies, maybe not even democracies, [that] are making nations successful."⁵¹⁴ In ensuring his state's competitiveness, the focus for Orban, too, would therefore be the nation, rather than the individual: "the Hungarian nation is not a simple sum of individuals, but a community that needs to be organised, strengthened and developed, and in this sense, the new state that we are building is an illiberal state, a non-liberal state."⁵¹⁵ The essence of his message, especially in the context in which it was delivered – to the Hungarian diaspora in Romania – was that 'new nationalism' would dominate Hungary's agenda, its commitments to Western values a potential obstacle to the country's success. In this view, the similarities with Putin's own dogma are apparent; coupled with Hungary's economic ventures with Russia, the ever closer connection between Budapest and Moscow should come as no surprise.

From an identity perspective, one may shed light on the magnitude and reasons behind Romania's concern over this shift. Russia and Hungary are already seen as the two greatest threats to the Romanian state, as the IRES survey shows.⁵¹⁶ The annexation of Crimea and frozen conflicts in the Donbas have reactivated anxieties concerning Russian expansionism, particularly in regards to the Republic of Moldova. Similarly, this chapter has discussed how Orban's rhetoric and policy focus on 'Greater Hungary' have amplified tensions surrounding the status of the Hungarian minority

⁵¹⁴ C.,Toth, 'Full Text of Viktor Orban's Speech at Baile Tusnad (Tusnádfürdő) of 26 July 2014,' *The Budapest Beacon*, 29.07.2014, <http://budapestbeacon.com/public-policy/full-text-of-viktor-orbans-speech-at-baile-tusnad-tusnadfurdo-of-26-july-2014/10592> [accessed 05 April 2016].

⁵¹⁵ Ibid.

⁵¹⁶ IRES statistic in Mihalache (2015).

and even ownership of Transylvania. As such, friendship between Budapest and Moscow in the current international climate augments the perceived danger. This is the combination of two separate areas relevant to the theme of Besieged Fortress. On the one hand, Hungary is a threat in itself. On the other, membership of the EU and NATO are seen as the essential safeguards against Russia. Hungary, however, as a fellow member, undermines these 'insurance policies' through its eastward-looking agenda. The possibility of Hungary becoming a Trojan Horse inside these two organisations would destabilise them from within. The theory of Trojan Horse Hungary is not unique to Romania, but it does strike a particular chord with this state, as it plays on the already existing anxieties concerning the intentions of this actor, and compounds the individual Hungarian and Russian threats. This view is contended by Dan Dungaciuc who has stated that, in respect to Hungary, "we are dealing with a 'clever dick,' (...) from within the Euro-Atlantic space, who is playing a double game" arguing that "Russia is not opposite of Europe, but its partner."⁵¹⁷ It is this type of message, he continues, coupled with a general anti-Western discourse, that threatens the European project altogether.⁵¹⁸

One may gather from this that Romania views Hungary not only as a threat to itself but, through its association to Russia, as a destabilising actor within the EU and NATO. Coupled with the pro-Russian attitudes of other European states, the danger is only magnified. It is because of the importance of Hungary in the Romanian imaginary, however, that the Trojan Horse theory so preoccupies Romania. The nationalist and eastern shifts together confirm for Romanians the fact that suspicion and distrust of their western neighbour were well founded and, consequently, anxieties concerning Budapest's behaviour are augmented. In this view, the relationship between Romania and Hungary has reached a level of tension similar to that in the early 1990s and this should come as no surprise. The argument of this thesis is that today the main reference points of Romania's position towards Hungary are no longer the principles of

⁵¹⁷ Dungaciuc in Fundatia Universitara a Marii Negre [Black Sea University Foundation], *Dezbateri: Puntea Moscova-Budapesta peste Ucraina si Romania [Debate: The Moscow-Budapest Bridge over the Ukraine and Romania]*, 18.02.2015, <http://fumn.eu/urmariti-inregistrarea-integrala-a-dezbaterii-puntea-moscova-budapesta-pest-ucraina-si-romania-18-februarie-2015/> [accessed 06 April 2016].

⁵¹⁸ Ibid.

cooperation and interdependence dictated by membership of the European community, but the identity-driven prerogatives of keeping her from meddling in Romania's domestic affairs and ensuring the state's security by ever closer collaboration with, particularly American, NATO forces. One would argue that, as identitary anxieties are exacerbated, distance from the traditional foe is the only permissible course of action. In this sense, the identity-perspective employed here captures the complex motivations behind Romania's interaction with Hungary, and highlights the red-lines the identity narrative creates, one of which is closeness to Budapest in current circumstances.

Future Directions for Hungarian-Romanian Relations

What remains to be discussed now is the potential future of relations between Budapest and Bucharest by referring to scenarios being considered in Romania at the moment. Picking up on the discussion in the introduction and Chapter 1 on the necessity to study the behaviour of small states, one would argue that, whilst it is true that Romania and Hungary are not major international players, the fact that the two are allies within the EU and NATO means that the stability of the region and the efficiency of the two organisation rests, at least in part, on their ability to cooperate and maintain at least cordial diplomatic relations. However, for Romania, the direction that Budapest seems to have adopted recently makes conciliation an almost impossible option, but for a change in direction by Budapest. The most worrying scenarios are those which concern the role Hungary might play in the stand-off between the EU and NATO, on the one hand, and Russia on the other, all of which subscribe to the theme of Besieged Fortress.

Romania's reservations and criticism towards states which have either failed to assess the danger posed by Russian expansionism in Ukraine, or have displayed pro-Russian attitudes has already been discussed in the previous chapter. In the specific case of Hungary, however, the anxiety is compounded. For instance, Romania has proven sensitive to the fact that Orban's 'Greater Hungary' includes a community in Ukraine, in the region of Transcarpathia. As a result, the Romanian media were quick to pick up on a suggestion made by Anne Applebaum in *The Spectator* that Viktor Orban may

have a vested interest in Russia's campaign in the Ukraine, regarding Transcarpathia: "a small slice of that fabled lost territory [i.e. Greater Hungary] is now part of Ukraine — a point the Russian foreign minister also brought up, curiously, in Munich. Perhaps this was a hint: if Russia successfully partitions Ukraine, maybe Budapest will get a slice too."⁵¹⁹ Through the lens of the Besieged Fortress theme, the worry is that, as a member of NATO, Hungary would be unwilling to adopt a strong position against Putin's potential partition of Ukraine thereby undermining NATO's Eastern European flank's capacity in tackling the ensuing security crisis. With Hungary standing to profit from a federalisation of Ukraine, the entire viability of NATO as an actor capable of withstanding and countering Russian expansionism would be in doubt. For Bucharest, this would signal that the protective umbrella offered by NATO membership may turn out to have been an illusion and the security prerogative membership satisfies may be undermined. Additionally, Russian advances in Ukraine might have repercussions on the fate of the Republic of Moldova, a state the pro-European future of which is of particular significance to Bucharest, for identitary reasons which will be discussed in the following chapter. Dungaciu summarised this view when he argued that the adoption of the federal solution in Ukraine "will give ideas that the conflict in Transnistria may also be resolved through federalisation (...). I worry that not all occidentals will be opposed to this and those who have the power to oppose it will not."⁵²⁰ The loss of Moldova, its Estranged Self, to the Russian sphere would be perceived as catastrophic in Romania, as close relations with this state have been at the top of its foreign policy agenda since its accession to the Euro-Atlantic projects.

In essence, Hungary's potential role as a Russian Trojan Horse inside the EU and NATO is seen by Bucharest as one of the greatest dangers facing Eastern European security, but also the Romanian state itself and, as a corollary, Moldova. The spread of the Russian sphere of influence into Ukraine and Moldova would mean the distance Romania has been building between itself and Russia would be threatened and its

⁵¹⁹ Applebaum, cited in L. Stan, "Relatia Ungaria-Rusia poate influenta si relatia Romania-Rep. Moldova [The Relationship between Hungary and Russia May Influence the Relationship between Romania and the Republic of Moldova]," *InfoPrut*, 20.02.2015, <http://infoprut.ro/36670-dungaciu-relatia-ungaria-rusia-poate-influenta-si-relatia-romania-rep-moldova.html> [accessed 05 April 2016].

⁵²⁰ Dungaciu for FUMN (2016).

interests in the Republic of Moldova irremediably damaged – indeed Moldova may cease to exist as a sovereign state altogether. Worse still, if Hungary were awarded Transcarpathia and with NATO impotent to curb Russian aggression, there would be no guarantee that Hungary’s claim over Transylvania would not be entertained by Moscow. Although this notion has not been addressed by Bucharest politicians, it has been discussed in the media. Recently, the Romanian news network *B1* picked up on a comment by Vladimir Putin that “if someone wants to start revisiting the results of World War II, well, let’s try to debate that topic. But then we need to debate not only Kaliningrad but the whole thing (...). There’s also Hungary and Romania.”⁵²¹ The Romanian network quotes Hungarian reactions to this statement, such as the opinion that “Putin raised eyebrows among Romanians and raised hope among some Hungarian nationalists, by suggesting that reviewing the post World War II border between Hungary and Romania could be on the agenda, if people question Russia’s borders and territories.”⁵²² In these scenarios are at play many of Romania’s major anxieties subscribed to the theme of Besieged Fortress – its security and independence from Moscow, Moldova’s pro-Western direction, and even Romania’s own territorial integrity.

This final scenario may seem implausible, but it is nonetheless the case that considerations such as this capture the strained relationship between Romania and Hungary and hint at the fact that this situation can only continue, under current circumstances. That is because the level of suspicion and animosity between the two states is being fuelled by Hungary’s pursuit of its nationalist and pro-Eastern agenda. In a climate in which there are doubts over whether Orban favours an alliance with his partners in the the EU and NATO, or Putin’s Russia, it is not surprising that these sequences of events are being considered. Russia’s rhetoric, meanwhile, is having a

⁵²¹ Bloomberg, *Putin Discusses Trump, OPEC, Rosneft, Brexit, Japan (Transcript)*, 05.09.2016, <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2016-09-05/putin-discusses-trump-opec-rosneft-brexit-japan-transcript> [accessed 02 January 2017].

⁵²² *Hungarian Press*, cited in *B1, Ungaria redeschide subiectul pretentiilor teritoriale asupra Transilvaniei: Presa maghiara comenteaza afirmatiile lui Putin privind reconsiderarea granitelor* [Hungary Reopens Discussion over Territorial Demands over Transylvania: Hungarian Press Comments Putin’s Statement Concerning Reconsidering Borders], 06.09.2016, <http://www.b1.ro/stiri/externe/ungaria-redeschide-subiectul-pretentiilor-teritoriale-asupra-transilvaniei-presa-maghiara-comenteaza-afirmatiile-lui-putin-privind-reconsiderarea-granitelor-foto-video-161145.html> [accessed 02 January 2017].

destabilising effect on the relationship between Romania and Hungary, and is sowing discord amongst European allies. This only adds to the challenges posed by the Eurosceptic trend that is sweeping the continent, and by the spate of Russophiles who have won elections in Eastern European states. The most worrying of these is, unsurprisingly, the Republic of Moldova, where the pro-Russian Igor Dodon was elected president in November 2016. An alliance between Hungary and Russia, doubled now by the rise of Russophiles in the Republic of Moldova means that there is a worrying potential eastern alignment amongst some of the most crucial actors in the construction of Romanian foreign policy. As Dungaciu pointed out, “the Budapest-Moscow axis has a new component – the old Budapest-Chisinau-Moscow axis, which will cause great problems for Romania.”⁵²³

The perception is, as has been explored in the previous chapter, that Romania is becoming increasingly isolated and besieged on the Eastern flank, caught between fragile states, such as Ukraine and Moldova, Eastern-facing Hungary, and Russia itself. The implications of this situation for the future stability and security of the region, but also for the potency of NATO to curb Russian expansionism and, perhaps, the viability of the European project altogether, are uncertain. Dungaciu believes that this will be a “strategic battle without precedent” and that the issue is one of “balance”⁵²⁴ between pro-Russian and pro-Western attitudes. The resistance aspect of the Besieged Fortress theme suggests that Romania’s position will be unwavering in its commitment to a hard approach to Russian expansionism. However, Hungary’s position is perceived as equally steadfast in the opposite direction. In these circumstances, it is difficult to see a reconciliation between the two states, particularly because of broader considerations regarding the future of Transylvania and Moldova. Since this animosity permeates through the political leadership into Romanian society, it is also difficult to envisage external pressure being enough to force a resolution. As mentioned earlier, public anti-Hungarian sentiments are pervasive and any government willing to compromise in this stand-off would have its legitimacy instantly eroded. In conclusion, one would argue that Romania and Hungary are heading towards an unbridgeable

⁵²³ Dungaciu for Ora Noua (2016).

⁵²⁴ Ibid.

level of opposition which may, at its height, severely affect the stability of Eastern Europe, and the internal cohesion of both the European Union and NATO.

Consequently, not awarding this brewing conflict the attention it deserves may, in the near future, come back to haunt analysts and policy-makers who might be tempted to write it off as a quintessential example of Balkan skirmishes.

Conclusion

This chapter has explored the nature of Romania's relationship with Hungary with reference to historically enduring claims about its identity. Working within the area of overlap of FPA and SC has allowed this thesis to capture the complex rationale behind Romania's position vis-à-vis Hungary, by focusing on the identity anxieties emerging from the portrayals of Self and Hungarian Other. The main assumption made by the project, namely that sedimented narratives on identity influence behaviour through the anxieties and prerogatives they create is confirmed by this case study. Anxieties over territorial integrity and sovereignty impacted Romanian-Hungarian relations throughout the first half of the 1990s. However, the notion that these may recede in opportune circumstances is also confirmed by the détente of the late 1990s and 2000s. Having said that, the endurance of these attitudes shows in the fact that public distrust towards Hungary did not disappear even as bilateral relations between the two states were flourishing. Finally, the thesis argues that, in the current context of Viktor Orbán's pronounced nationalist and eastern shift, anxieties have been augmented to a critical level, becoming the main reference point in Bucharest's negotiating of its relationship with Hungary. In a setting of systemic challenges faced by the EU in light of economic dependence on and conflicting approaches towards Russia, Romania's perception that it is a Besieged Fortress, caught between fragile and pro-Russian states, has been exacerbated. In this light, the pattern of behaviour towards Hungary, one of the main proponents of this shift, is one focused on criticism of its general direction and limiting its involvement in Romania's domestic affairs. Despite the fact that the rift building between Bucharest and Budapest is threatening regional stability and may, indeed, play into Russia's own agenda, conciliation with Hungary is unlikely, because of the level of threat perception in regards to its plans for Transylvania. As

anxieties are at their height, Romania's contemporary behaviour towards Hungary is dominated by the identity-driven prerogatives to ensure the security and integrity of the state, and Romanians' unquestioned sovereign control over it.

Chapter 7. Romania's Relationship with the Republic of Moldova – Two States, One People?

*Poor Bessarabian sister
You, the holiest of all
In vain your mother asks you
If you live in freedom.*

*Wake up you, benumbed nation
Because if in the heat of cold calculations
We lose Bessarabia once more
We too will be lost forever
There is nowhere for our brothers to turn
And they wait in vain for a sign from us
Bessarabia is taken away on its cross
And we contemplate it with a blank stare.⁵²⁵*

Introduction

This chapter examines the nature of the relationship between Romania and the Republic of Moldova from the perspective of its narrative on national identity. The first section explores the portrayal of Moldova in the Romanian narrative, and the fact that Bessarabia is represented as an Estranged Self, rather than an Other. From this representation emerge the identity-derived attitudes which shape Romania's behaviour towards its eastern neighbour, namely that Romania perceives it has a vested interest in the fate of this state and a duty to ensure its security, pro-Western direction and maintain a special relation with it. Following on from this, the next section examines Moldo-Romanian interactions during transition, emphasising the role Moldova's ambivalence towards its own identity, but also other domestic and external factors, have played in preventing the two states from unifying and, later, complicated their special relationship. It is argued that, as a result of these circumstances, Bucharest changed its goals from uniting with Moldova to supporting its integration

⁵²⁵ Romanian folk song: T. Stepa and A. Paunescu, 'Sora Basaraba/Balada pentru Basarabia [Bessarabian Sister/ Balad for Bessarabia],' *Cenaclul Flacara [The Flame Literary Circle]*, Vol. 12 (2008).

process, alongside Romania's own. A subsequent section is dedicated to Romania's contemporary relationship with the Republic of Moldova in the aftermath of the former's accession to the EU and NATO. The thesis highlights the efforts Bucharest has made to strengthen this relationship, whilst also remaining an advocate of Chisinau with the EU and NATO. However, regional developments, most notably the crisis in Eastern Ukraine and Moldova's domestic political turmoil have created anxieties in Bucharest over its neighbour's future. The final section, therefore, examines two specific scenarios concerning possible developments regarding Ukraine and Transnistria which may put at risk Moldova's pro-Western direction and even its independence and sovereignty. The potential outcomes, that of a complete breakdown of relations between Bucharest and Chisinau, and of an *ad hoc* unification in case of the outbreak of a conflict between Moldova and Transnistria, are explored in terms of their repercussions on regional stability and East-West relations. The significance of this chapter is that it explores how identity narratives may generate affinities as well as anxieties and examines the manner in which these attitudes impact both the bilateral relationship between the two states, as well as regional stability more broadly.

Romania's Identity Driven Attitude towards the Republic of Moldova – Affinity for the Estranged Self

Much like in the other two relationships explored so far, entrenched claims about identity play a significant role in influencing Romania's attitudes, and through this, its behaviour towards the Republic of Moldova. Similarly to the previous case-studies, the particular representation of this actor is deeply sedimented in the Romanian consciousness, and the continuity of the historical narrative has ensured that the history of interaction between Romania and Moldova is especially vivid. However, this is where similarities between the representation of this Other, and those explored previously, end. So far, the focus has been on how the identity narrative has created profound anxieties which, particularly in the current international climate, account for increasingly tense relations between this state and its traditional 'foes' Russia and

Hungary. Picking up on Waever and Hansen's argument about the Self/Other nexus,⁵²⁶ however, it is also the case that, in the same way it can create enduring anti-Other sentiments, profound beliefs about identity can also lead to the establishment of indelible links between Romanians and those seen to be 'like them.' The Republic of Moldova, Romania's direct eastern neighbour, and, more importantly, its people, are precisely such an entity. Both the historical and identity narratives have generated, from the Romanian perspective, at least the perception, if not the complete reality, of a shared identity between the two peoples. In fact, Romanians often refer to the Republic as Romania's 'sister,' and Moldovans as their 'brothers.'⁵²⁷ Moldova is therefore not portrayed as an Other, in the strict sense of the term; rather, representations of this actor emphasise the identity sameness between Romanians and Moldovans and, as such, this neighbour is perceived more accurately as an Estranged Self.



Figure 6. The Republic of Moldova in historical and geographic context. In red, the contemporary

⁵²⁶ Hansen and Waever (2002).

⁵²⁷ A recent example is the leader of the Socialist Party, Liviu Dragnea, quoted in A. Tobias and V. Magranean, 'Dragnea: Trebuie sa existe o implicare mai mare a Romaniei privind Republica Moldova, e sora noastra [Dragnea: Romania Must Be More Involved in Regards to the Republic of Moldova, She Is Our Sister],' *Mediafax*, 08.07.2015, <http://www.mediafax.ro/politic/dragnea-trebuie-sa-existe-o-implicare-mai-mare-a-romaniei-privind-republica-moldova-e-sora-noastra-14563168> [accessed 9 July 2015].

territory of the Republic; in pink, Romanian Moldova; in orange, former Moldavian (and Romanian) territories annexed by Ukraine after the Second World War; in light red at the eastern border of the Republic, the secessionist region of Transnistria. Source: S.I. Cepleanu (2011). See list of figures for complete reference.

This portrayal is rooted in both the intertwined history of the two states and in their similar identity markers. The territory which is now the Republic of Moldova, also known as Bessarabia, formed, for the better part of the history of the Romanian provinces, the eastern half of Moldavia – for this and Moldova’s overall territorial evolution, see [Figure 6]. That means, in effect, that the Foundation Myths apply equally to Moldova as they do to Romania. Their origins are Daco-Roman, their language is Latin - it is, in effect, “indistinguishable from Romanian,”⁵²⁸ their religion is Orthodoxy and their ethnicity is, implicitly, Romanian. Bessarabians are, for all intents and purposes, identical from this perspective to their brothers across the River Prut (now the border between the two states) in the Romanian part of Moldavia. Equally, their historical experience of the Middle Ages and of the beginning of Modernity was shared with their fellow Moldavians.⁵²⁹ As a result, there exists an indelible historical and identity link based on the Foundation Myths and theme of Besieged Fortress between this territory and Romania proper. As Lucian Boia summarises, this has created in Romanians the sense that Bessarabians are, in effect the same as them: “they belonged to Moldavia, then Romania and they speak Romanian; they are therefore, Romanian, born Romanian.”⁵³⁰ The issue of Bessarabia and, indeed, what sets it apart from Romania proper are linked to events which began in 1812 and have led to the forced separation of the two states, the author of which was Russia.

Previous chapters have already explored the circumstances of the loss of Bessarabia in the aftermath of a Russo-Turkish war, at a time when the Romanian national project was only just getting underway. For Djuvara, for instance, there exists a “drama of Bessarabia” which starts in 1812 when “we lose [it] for the first time.”⁵³¹ The drama continued as Bessarabia united with Romania in 1918 but was returned to Russia as a

⁵²⁸ Magocsi (2002), p.151.

⁵²⁹ For purposes of avoiding confusion, the thesis will use the terms Bessarabia and Moldova in reference to the territory of the Republic of Moldova, and that of Moldavia for the historical region from which it was separated in 1812.

⁵³⁰ L. Boia (2012), p.245.

⁵³¹ Djuvara (2010), p.172 and 170.

result of the Soviet ultimatum of 1940. Bucharest entered the Second World War to recover the region but the defeat of Germany consecrated the ultimate separation between the two states and Moldova's incorporation in the Soviet Union. This reality, coupled with the fact that "the Soviet Union permitted very limited contact between Romania and Moldova"⁵³² during the Cold War, has had a significant impact on both the portrayal of the Self and the Russian Other. Bessarabia is, on the one hand, the new Besieged Fortress; its unjust separation from Romania proper means that the prerogative dictated by the theme of Unity, that all Romanians should be brought together in a single state, remains unfulfilled. On the other hand, the region's rightful unification with the mother-state has been upset by the actions of an Other with no justified claims over this territory.⁵³³ The issue of Bessarabia is, consequently, one of the thorny areas of contention between Bucharest and Moscow. In this context, Moldovans are seen as victims of an oppressive foreign force, much like Romanians had been throughout much of their history. There is a projection, therefore, of Romanians' troubled experience onto the region of Bessarabia, which strengthens the affinity of the former towards the latter. Telling of this is the fact that the communist regime of Nicolae Ceausescu had a policy of "supporting historians who were critical of the Soviet official position," namely that Moldova rightly belonged to Russia, and instead "argued that Moldova was a Romanian territory."⁵³⁴ The notion that, even during communism, the view that Bessarabia had been effectively stolen from Romania was propagated is proof of how entrenched this belief is amongst Romanians.

The result of the portrayal of the Republic of Moldova as an Estranged Other has led to the development of a particular attitude towards this state, dominated by the perception of sameness, or a sign of equality between the two states. Whilst they may be separate entities there exists a powerful sense that both Romania and Moldova are inhabited by the same people. This means, on the one hand, that Bucharest has a vested interest in the affairs of Chisinau and maintaining close relationships with it is

⁵³² Roper (2000), p.125.

⁵³³ See Boia (2012), p. 94 or Constantiniu (2011), p.286.

⁵³⁴ Roper (2000), p.126.

paramount. As Anonymous D has argued, Moldova represents an “obsession”⁵³⁵ for Romania. On the other hand, the matter of a potential re-unification has never been taken off the table completely since the end of the Cold War. The result of this identitary affinity is that Moldova occupies a very special place in the Romanian imaginary, as one of its critical relationships which speaks directly to the prerogatives set by its national identity narrative in regards to the theme of Unity. One should not forget that, as long as Bessarabia remains an independent state, the Romanian national project is incomplete. These perceptions have had a significant impact on the interaction between the two states, both before and after Romania’s accession to the EU and NATO. In light of current regional developments, this affinity may, however, have serious repercussions on the stability of Eastern Europe, as will be discussed in following sections.

Moldo-Romanian Relations During the Transition Period

The Republic of Moldova represents the area in the East Romanians are most concerned with. Unlike its relations to Russia and Hungary, Romania was very keen to establish a strong connection with Chisinau and initially pursued the avenue of re-unification into what would have approximated the contours of Greater Romania.⁵³⁶ Indeed, even amongst Western observers this outcome seemed inevitable.⁵³⁷ The waves of optimism and nationalism of the late 1980s and early 1990s, however, never materialised into a union similar to that of East and West Germany. The reasons why that was the case have to do with both external and internal circumstances, but may also have an identitary dimension, both of which require some attention.

At the moment of the collapse of the Soviet Union, Romania’s position on the Republic of Moldova was the one outlined above: the sense of a shared identity with Moldova had never waned, fuelled, as it had been, by the socialist nationalist policy of Ceausescu. On the other side, Moldova too was experiencing something of a national

⁵³⁵ Anonymous D (2014).

⁵³⁶ See [Figure 4]. One says ‘approximate’ because, as is evident from [Figure 6], certain Moldovan territories were annexed to Ukraine.

⁵³⁷ See Cash (2007) or Panici (2003) for instance.

awakening. Under Gorbachev's glasnost policy pro-Romanian opposition groups had coalesced into a political formation, the Popular Front which had been pushing for "linguistic and cultural freedom."⁵³⁸ More broadly, the Front was asking for a formal recognition of the link between the Moldovan and Romanian languages and the essential demarcation between their republic and Moscow. In 1989 the Front summoned a large scale rally which was attended by 500.000 people "carrying Romanian flags and placards written with Latin letters and denouncing the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact [and] the Soviet annexation of Bessarabia."⁵³⁹ The Popular Front won the 1990 elections and when, in August 1991, Moldova declared its independence from the USSR, Romania was the first to recognise the new state's sovereignty.⁵⁴⁰ With a pro-Romanian government at the helm, it seemed as though the Soviet dominion had done nothing to dampen the Romanianness of Moldovans. Indeed, as Boia argues, "the Republic of Moldova seemed ready to throw itself in Romania's arms. Romanian (and not 'Moldovan,' as it was called in the Soviet era) was declared the official language and even the colours of the Romanian flag were adopted: red, yellow and blue."⁵⁴¹ Even more poignantly, Romania's anthem, *Awaken, Romanian*, became the new republic's national anthem also.

This euphoria, however, was short lived. The years of Soviet rule had changed the ethnic composition of the Moldovan state – only 65% of its citizens were ethnic Romanians, whilst amongst the minorities nearly 14% were Ukrainian and 13% Russian.⁵⁴² Therefore, Chisinau's pro-Romanian direction may have appealed to two thirds of the population, but it had the reverse effect on the other third. As Cash points out, "pro-unification rhetoric generated significant fear and anxiety among ethnic minorities, contributing to the development of the Transnistrian and Gagauz conflicts in the years following independence."⁵⁴³ Indeed, soon after the Moldovan's government intention to pursue a unionist policy became clear, Transnistria and

⁵³⁸ Roper (2000), p.125.

⁵³⁹ A. Panici, 'Romanian Nationalism in the Republic of Moldova,' *The Global Review of Ethnopolitics*, 2:2 (January 2003), p.39.

⁵⁴⁰ Ibid., p.46.

⁵⁴¹ Boia (2012), p.246.

⁵⁴² Magoci (2002), p.152.

⁵⁴³ J.R. Cash, 'Origins, Memory, and Identity: 'Villages' and the Politics of Nationalism in the Republic of Moldova,' *East European Politics and Societies*, 21:4 (2007), p.590.

Gagauzia⁵⁴⁴ proclaimed themselves republics separate from Chisinau. With the Gagauz Chisinau managed to settle the dispute in a peaceful manner, offering the region special autonomous status in December 1994.⁵⁴⁵

Transnistria, however, was a different matter. East of the Dniester the population was in its majority of Russian or Ukrainian ethnicity and a Russian regiment, known as the 14th Army, was stationed in its territory. Transnistria was also the focus of Soviet industrialisation and, although it makes up only 8% of the country's territory, it accounted for 40% of its overall industrial output⁵⁴⁶ and 87.5% of its electric energy production.⁵⁴⁷ In other words, the region was critical to Moldova's economic stability and constituted Russia's main leverage in its relations to Chisinau. Civil war erupted in 1992, when Chisinau attempted to overthrow the secessionist government in Tiraspol. However, the Transnistrian forces, which benefitted from the active support of the 2.600 strong 14th Army and a "substantial stockpile of Soviet weaponry,"⁵⁴⁸ quickly emerged victorious. As a result, Transnistria became a secessionist region, proclaiming itself the Transnistrian Moldova Republic, its existence acknowledged by its main benefactor, Russia, but unrecognised by Chisinau. A stalemate had been reached, unsurpassed to this day, with neither the Moldovans nor Transnistrians open to compromise and with Russia happy to maintain the *status-quo* of a frozen conflict.

Throughout this, Romania never got actively involved, acting, instead, only as a "diplomatic supporter of Moldova."⁵⁴⁹ Whether anxieties over a potential clash with Russia were at the root of this hesitation is difficult to assess. What this episode proves is that re-unification was not as straightforward an affair as the the two states had expected. Both Romania and Moldova had changed dramatically since the inter-war period. For Bucharest, Moldova was revealed as a fragile state with powerful links to

⁵⁴⁴ The Gagauz people are ethnically of Turkic descent, but who have adopted Orthodoxy, rather than Islam, as their main religion.

⁵⁴⁵ Magocsii (2002), p.151.

⁵⁴⁶ A. Sanchez, 'The 'Frozen' Southeast: How the Moldova-Transnistria Question Has Become a European Security Issue,' *The Journal of Slavic Military Studies*, 22:2 (2009), p.158.

⁵⁴⁷ Panici (2003), p.47.

⁵⁴⁸ E. Korosteleva, 'Moldova's European Choice: 'Between Two Stools?,' *Europe-Asia Studies*, 62:8 (2010), p.1268.

⁵⁴⁹ Roper (2000), p.126.

Moscow, the very entity Romania was attempting to distance itself from. Moldova, similarly, found that Romania “was by far no social or economic paradise”⁵⁵⁰ and could not offer an alternative avenue to Russia. Beyond that, unlike Russia, which had made its interest to keep Moldova in its sphere of influence clear, Romania never made any decided effort to kick-start the unification process.⁵⁵¹ These were serious impediments to unification, and, as the initial euphoria of Moldova’s independence dissipated, they became insurmountable. The two states began drifting apart. First, in 1992, when negotiating a Basic Treaty, they could not agree on “how to define the nature of the relations (whether they are ‘brotherly’ or ‘neighbourly’).”⁵⁵² In 1994, Chisinau took a further step towards delineating the Moldovan and Romanian peoples: the Romanian anthem was replaced with an original hymn, *Our Language*, whilst the constitution stated that the official state language was to be Moldovan, rather than Romanian.⁵⁵³ The reality that Moldova and Romania would remain separate states was ultimately confirmed in 1994, when a national referendum showed that 95% of Moldovans wished for their country to remain independent.⁵⁵⁴

Working from an identity-based perspective, however, may offer additional insight into the reasons behind the failed unification project. For Romanians, on the one hand, there has never been any question that they and the Moldovans are the same people, and that Moldova-the state is the artificial creation of the Soviets. This is reflected not only in the rhetoric its leaders, who continue to refer to Moldova as ‘our sister, Bessarabia,’⁵⁵⁵ but also in the fact that the notion has never been challenged by any political party. Instead, one notices that, alongside Romania’s pro-Western direction, on this issue alone there exists complete political alignment. Anonymous D captured this view when he argued that “there exists a certain obsession, which in a way is legitimate and can be considered rational.”⁵⁵⁶ Panici also notes that: “all parties in

⁵⁵⁰ Panici (2003), p. 42.

⁵⁵¹ Cash (2007), p.591.

⁵⁵² I. Angelescu, ‘New Eastern Perspectives? A Critical Analysis of Romania’s Relations with Moldova, Ukraine and the Black Sea Region,’ *Perspectives*, 19:2 (2011) - *Special Issue: Identity and Solidarity in Foreign Policy: Investigating East Central European Relations with the Eastern Neighbourhood*, p.131.

⁵⁵³ Panici (2003), pp.43-44.

⁵⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, p.43.

⁵⁵⁵ Leader of the PSD, Liviu Dragnea, cited in Tobias and Magranean (2015).

⁵⁵⁶ Anonymous D (2014).

Bucharest agreed that the annexation in 1940 was illegal, that there was no question about the true Romanian identity of the Moldovans (...), and that in an ideal world the two states would certainly be joined into a reconstituted Greater Romania.”⁵⁵⁷ This view reflects the position of Romanian society, 76% of whom supported a potential unification with the Republic of Moldova in 2013.⁵⁵⁸ So ingrained is this position in the Romanian mentality that it may itself have acted as an obstacle to unification. As Cash argues, overwhelming consensus at both societal and political level meant that “‘Bessarabia’ never emerged as a wedge issue that could increase one party’s power over that of others.”⁵⁵⁹ Because the Moldovan question was not contested, it was not an issue of major salience and, consequently, never represented a major foreign policy priority. The fact, however, remains that Romanians share the conviction that Moldovan and Romanian identities are analogous, and therefore that unification is justified.

On the other hand, whether the Moldovans still ‘feel’ Romanian is an altogether more complex issue. Despite the resurgence of Romanian nationalism in the late 1980s, the subsequent cooling of relations between Chisinau and Bucharest was a symptom of Moldova’s struggle to decide on its own identity, a reality acutely felt on the other side of the River Prut. The question Lucian Boia asks is pertinent: “are they still Romanian?”⁵⁶⁰ The fact is that Bessarabia, separated from the rest of Moldavia in 1812, was cut away from the other Romanian regions at a time when the processes aimed at unification were gathering pace, at both political and psychological levels. The question therefore is whether the theme of Unity was ever as powerful in Moldova as it had been in the kin state. Romania itself came into existence without the Bessarabians, who were, instead, the subject of intense Russification. In total, Bessarabia spent under three decades as part of the Romanian state (1918-1940 and 1941-1944), compared to a considerably longer period of influence from Russia (nearly

⁵⁵⁷ Panici (2003), p.45.

⁵⁵⁸ IRES [The Romanian Institute for Evaluation and Strategy], *Agenda Publica – Semnificatia sarbatorii de 1 Decembrie. Vizita Premierului Chinei in Romania [Public Agenda – the Significance of the Celebration of 1 December. The Chinese Prime-Minister’s Visit to Romania]*, 29 November 2013, http://www.ires.com.ro/uploads/articole/ires_agenda_publica-1_decembrie_2013.pdf [accessed 31.05.2016], p.9.

⁵⁵⁹ Cash (2007), p.591.

⁵⁶⁰ Boia (2012), p.245.

150 years), who, conversely, had made a concerted effort to engineer the sense of a unique Moldovan identity and strengthen the links between Chisinau and Moscow.

As a result, as early as the inter-war period, Bessarabia no longer perfectly mirrored its Romanian counterpart. Romanian administrators attempting to integrate Bessarabia into the newly expanded state, “were faced with the task of convincing ethnic Moldovans that they were, in fact, ethnic Romanians.” This and the broader project of state building encountered difficulties “because ethnic Moldovans held Russian language and culture in high esteem.”⁵⁶¹ It would seem as though the nation-building process embarked upon by Bessarabia under Russian authority had taken roots, a fact which Bucharest failed to recognise, and it seems apparent that the gap between Moldova and Romania was not fully bridged during the unification period. The fifty years of further Russian domination after the Second World War would only have deepened the cleavage between the two. As Panici points out, “the authoritarian political system of the Soviet era put a premium on Moldovan national affiliation and often spared no expense in the effort to engineer one.”⁵⁶² Amongst the actions undertaken one would highlight the alphabet change from Latin to Cyrillic and the adoption of Russian as a second national language. All the while in Ceausescu’s Romania the identity narrative was emphasising the theme of Unity and the Romanian national character, in Moldova the nation-building project was aimed in the opposite direction and was meant to instil the belief that on either side of their common border, the River Prut, existed two different peoples. This, in a sense, explains Moldovans’ ambivalence towards claims that their identity is, in fact, Romanian. Boia emphasises this when he argues that “Moldova does not resemble Romania. (...) Romanian Bessarabians are of a different sort. Their cultural level is lower than in Romania, and the Russian hallmark is substantial. The past cannot be undone, this is the outcome.”⁵⁶³ In effect, Boia’s implied outcome is that the same historical processes which reinforced Romanians’ convictions that Moldova is rightfully a part of Romania

⁵⁶¹ Cash (2007). P.592.

⁵⁶² Panici, (2003), p.37.

⁵⁶³ Boia (2012), p.246.

may have led Moldovans to question this very notion, and may have kick-started the development of a sense of a unique, Moldovan, national identity.

In any case, once the euphoria over a potential re-unification subsided, dialogue between the two states became more complicated. As Angelescu has argued, "relations became tense after 1993, and after the tensions passed, the relations have been gradually, but slowly, improving,"⁵⁶⁴ as Romania reconciled with the notion that unification was not a viable solution. There still existed the basis for a special relationship – the border between the two states was passport and visa free,⁵⁶⁵ and the socio-cultural connection was strengthened through a program of offering school textbooks and university scholarships to Moldovan students.⁵⁶⁶ However, interaction between Bucharest and Chisinau became strained once more with the rise to power of the Party of Communists. The fact that they attracted a significant electoral percentage in 1998 and remained a force in Moldovan politics well into the twenty-first century⁵⁶⁷ signalled to Romania the Republic's ambivalence not only towards the type of relationship the two should maintain but also its commitment to pursuing a pro-Western direction. With the Communists in power, the government in Chisinau did much to threaten this relationship and with it, Romania's appetite for establishing closer ties with Moldova. As Panici pointed out, in 2002 the Party of Communists led by Vladimir Voronin declared a Romanian military attaché *persona non grata* and announced it was considering rejecting that year's two thousand university scholarships.⁵⁶⁸

Overall, the fact that the domestic politics of its closest neighbour were once more dominated by communists dampened Romania's aplomb; it certainly, at the very least, raised questions as to whether Moldova wished to escape the Russian sphere of influence at all. In light of Romania's own difficult transition, this meant that relations with the Republic of Moldova could not be prioritised over the accession goal. As Cash

⁵⁶⁴ Angelescu (2011), p.130.

⁵⁶⁵ Panici (2003), p.46.

⁵⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁶⁷ The Party of Communists was a reconstituted version of the Communist Party outlawed in 1991, set up in 1993. In the 1998 parliamentary elections they secured 30% of the popular vote and in 2001 they won a parliamentary majority. On this see Panici (2003).

⁵⁶⁸ Ibid., p.50.

argued, whilst “national identity is deeply important to the political process, (...) regional power balances, economic interest and pragmatism in ethnic relations have held sway in foreign policy developments.”⁵⁶⁹ Romania, therefore, limited its approach to that of supporting Moldova’s own accession process to the EU alongside its own.⁵⁷⁰ However, one would make the point that, once Moldova’s ambivalence over its Romanianness became apparent, and was doubled by the rise of the Party of Communists, what happened in Romania was a reshuffling of its identity-based priorities. The goal of unification would have had preponderance over that of Euro-Atlantic integration, because of the significance of the theme of Unity in the Romanian identity narrative. The fact that Iliescu, who was generally resistant to change and dubious in his commitment towards the accession process, pursued this direction outright in the early 1990s speaks to the importance of this desideratum. Under president Constantinescu, however, as a perception emerged that Moldova was either not yet ready for this step, or had a pro-Eastern agenda, the issue of unification was moved to the back burner, allowing for the more pragmatic goals Cash mentions to become predominant. These too, meanwhile, had a powerful identitary dimension, as the desire to join the West was motivated by the prerogative of ensuring the state’s physical and economic security, as well as its distance from Moscow. In conclusion, one would argue that both goals are motivated by identity-driven considerations, but what changed in the 1990s and early 2000s was their order of priority, much like in the case of Hungarian-Romanian relations of the same period. As the next section will explore, once accession became reality, the policy of pursuing closer ties with Chisinau came back to the fore of Romania’s foreign policy agenda.

Contemporary Moldo-Romanian Relations

Despite periods during the transition when relations between the two states were particularly uneasy and Romania prioritised different foreign policy goals, socio-economic and cultural links between the two countries continued and only intensified after Romania’s accession. Building on the assumptions made by the thesis in the

⁵⁶⁹ Cash (2007), p.592.

⁵⁷⁰ Angelescu (2011), p.132.

introductory chapters, in this relationship, again, one notices the primacy of identity-based prerogatives in the pursuit of individual foreign policy priorities, namely ensuring close relations with Moldova. This translated in efforts to encourage Moldova's transition from socialism, its pro-Western direction, and most importantly, strengthening the ethnic Romanian element at the societal level. Because the border arrangement between the two states could no longer continue after Romania's entering the European Union, Bucharest took the decision, in 2009, to offer all Moldovans of Romanian ethnicity a Romanian, and therefore European, passport. Additionally, a significant number of Romanian companies have been registered in the Republic (around 650) and Romania ranks amongst the ten most important foreign investors in the state in the period of 1994-2008.⁵⁷¹ Romania also pledged to offer Moldova 100 million euros between 2011-2014,⁵⁷² in aid of "one of Europe's poorest countries."⁵⁷³ The cultural connection was maintained, with Romania still providing Romanian language textbooks and university scholarships for Moldovan students. Finally Romania has acted as an advocate for Moldova's own EU integration efforts, with former prime-minister Ponta announcing Romania's mission to achieve Moldova's European inclusion by 2019, when Romania takes over the presidency of the union.⁵⁷⁴ As a side note, this declaration took place immediately after Moldova signed the Association Agreement with the EU, at the Eastern Partnership Summit, in Vilnius (2013).

Whether this aim is truly feasible in the current context or not, Romania's commitment to drawing Moldova closer to itself and Western Europe is unquestionable. Of course, the fact that after the 2009 parliamentary elections the leadership of Moldova switched to a pro-European and pro-Romanian centre-right coalition would also have aided these developments. The perception that in Chisinau sits a government which is committed to the country's pro-Western direction alleviates Romanian anxieties over the extent of Russia's involvement in their affairs

⁵⁷¹ Angelescu (2011), p.133.

⁵⁷² Ibid.

⁵⁷³ G. Bosse, 'The EU's Relations with Moldova: Governance, Partnership or Ignorance?,' *Europe-Asia Studies*, 62:8 (October 2010), p.1291.

⁵⁷⁴ Anonymous D (2014).

or, at the very least, the extent to which the leadership is comfortable with this. In any case, it is clear that, especially since 2007, relations with the Republic became a priority for Bucharest. Through the lens of the Romanian identity narrative, the reasons behind this appear straightforward. Romania has consolidated its position both within Europe and as NATO partner. Now, establishing ever closer relations with Chisinau goes beyond bilateral agreements between the two states and Romania has additional leverage to tempt the Republic. Bucharest now embodies not only its sister state, but also all Euro-Atlantic values as well as the potential benefits to be reaped from pursuing a pro-Western direction. From an identity perspective, what is clear is that Romania's affinity towards Moldova did not disappear during the difficult period of transition; its influence over Bucharest's behaviour receded temporarily because of perceptions over the Moldovan domestic climate and, consequently, an alteration of Romania's own priorities. However, as external circumstances became opportune, it re-emerged, thus proving the endurance of this identity-based attitude.

The reality is, nonetheless, that what Lucian Boia called the Russian 'hallmark' is indeed still very powerful. There are two aspects in particular in which Russia's domination over the Republic of Moldova is most prominent – the economic and the political/strategic spheres. On the one hand, the Republic is one of Europe's poorest states and it is, almost entirely, dependent on Russia. Firstly, Moldova has to import nearly all of its energy supplies⁵⁷⁵ and, although Romania began supplying it electric power in 1998⁵⁷⁶ and gas in 2014, Russia remains its main source of gas imports, which account for over 60% of its energy consumption.⁵⁷⁷ In terms of trade, on the other hand, although the EU has become the "main destination for Moldovan exports,"⁵⁷⁸ the Russian Federation remains the most important single importer of Moldovan goods (40%),⁵⁷⁹ with a high-on monopoly on Moldova's wine trade. These are both significant, as they may act, as they have in the past, as levers for Russia to put pressure on Chisinau and curb Moldova's Western aspirations. As Korosteleva argues,

⁵⁷⁵ L.V. Fokina, 'Economic Cooperation Between Russian Regions and Moldova,' *Problems of Economic Transition*, 47:12 (April 2005), p.80.

⁵⁷⁶ Panici (2003), p.46.

⁵⁷⁷ Fokina (2005), pp.80-81.

⁵⁷⁸ Bosse (2010), p.1303.

⁵⁷⁹ Fokina (2005), p.80.

“Russia has (...) used various economic means to negotiate its political leverage, such as the sudden reductions in the supply of gas, oil and electricity in the winter of 2005-2006 after the failure to reach agreement on the Kozak Memorandum for Transnistria,”⁵⁸⁰ but also through a recent embargo on Moldova’s wine exports which “were used to discipline Moldova for its increasingly defined leaning towards the West.”⁵⁸¹ In other words, Russia has not refrained from using its hard power to keep Moldova firmly within its control. In the face of such decided action from Moscow, and with a European Union ambivalent in its commitments towards the European Neighbourhood,⁵⁸² it is difficult for Moldova to disentangle itself from Russia’s sphere of influence.

The second dimension worthy of discussion concerns Transnistria and Russia’s own strategic agenda. The separatist region functions largely as a Russian enclave since, beyond the presence of the 14th Army, Russia subsidises “as much as 80% of the Transnistrian budget” and “has issued passports to some 150.000 residents of the region.”⁵⁸³ As such, it has a vested interest in the region and therefore, in the affairs of Chisinau. Additionally, Russia has allowed Transnistria to acquire significant debts to Gazprom, to the value of 3.8 billion dollars, nearly double that of the Ukraine’s (2 billion dollars).⁵⁸⁴ If in the Ukraine this debt resulted in a cut-off of gas supply which inadvertently affected the entire continent in 2009, considerably less pressure has been put on Tiraspol to clear its credit.⁵⁸⁵ That may be because the Transnistrian debt gives Moscow ascendancy in its relationship with Chisinau, particularly in regards to a potential resolution to the Transnistrian conflict. Russia favours a federative solution which would result in a power-sharing agreement between the governments in Tiraspol and Chisinau, which the Moldovans, particularly its pro-Western parties, would likely not acquiesce to.⁵⁸⁶ Were Moldova, however, to search for a different

⁵⁸⁰ Korosteleva (2010), p.1279.

⁵⁸¹ Ibid.

⁵⁸² See Bosse (2010) for a more detailed account of the unequal partnership between the Republic of Moldova and the European Union.

⁵⁸³ N. Popescu and L. Litra, ‘Transnistria: A Bottom-Up Solution,’ *European Council on Foreign Relations*, 63 (September 2012), p.4

⁵⁸⁴ Ibid., p.2.

⁵⁸⁵ Korosteleva (2010), p.1279.

⁵⁸⁶ Popescu and Litra (2012), p.5.

solution, whether a centralised reintegration or even a unification with Romania without Transnistria, Russia may demand the debt be cleared by Chisinau. As Dmitry Rogozin, Russia deputy prime-minister and Putin's representative in Transnistria has stated, "if Moldova will not recognise Transnistria, then it means that the gas consumed by Transnistria (...) is Moldova's debt, and Moldova should pay for it. Who else?"⁵⁸⁷

It is obvious, therefore, that Transnistria represents a major issue for the Republic of Moldova, both as a domestic concern, but also in its relations with Russia. An even greater threat, however, is that a frozen conflict such as this is always liable to be reactivated. Russia has proven, both in Georgia in 2008 and in Ukraine in 2014, that it will not hesitate to utilise these problem regions to pursue its own foreign agenda. In this context, Moldova's geopolitical positioning as a buffer state between NATO and Russia is also significant. At the River Prut the CIS and NATO have a direct border, and the instalment and operationalization of the ballistic missile shield on Romanian territory has been taken in Moscow, as has been shown in previous chapters, as a direct challenge to Russia. As Gusa has pointed out, "quite obviously, Russia wishes to transform the European flank of the CIS – Ukraine, Belarus, Moldova – in a veritable bastion capable of rejecting European and American presence in the region."⁵⁸⁸ If this assessment is correct, then the pro-Western shift of both Ukraine and Moldova of recent years must be taken as direct threats to the Russian sphere of influence. Additionally, if Russia's response to this development in Ukraine is anything to go by, it hints at the risks Moldova faces in pursuing a Western and pro-Romanian direction. This explains, coupled with the geographic proximity of Moldova to the Ukraine (the latter actually engulfs the former and the only section of Moldova which does not border Ukraine is its western frontier with Romania), Bucharest's concern over recent regional developments. From this perspective, Moldova is indeed a Besieged Fortress,

⁵⁸⁷ Rogozin, cited in Popescu and Litra (2012), p.5.

⁵⁸⁸ Gusa (2011), pp.225-226.

threatened both economically and physically by the Transnistrian issue, a region which recently restated its desire to annex itself to Russia.⁵⁸⁹

Although Russia has not yet responded to this request, recent developments would, nonetheless, have unsettled both Chisinau and Bucharest. The view is that both states have an important stake in the Ukrainian conflict, because of the striking similarities between Transnistria and Crimea. The developments in Ukraine have undoubtedly strengthened perceptions of Moldova as a Besieged Fortress and from this stems Romania's current efforts to push for closer relations between Moldova and NATO⁵⁹⁰ and act as an advocate for Chisinau in its negotiations with the European Union. For its own part, the pro-European government in Moldova has intensified its contact with NATO in particular: in 2016 it reached an agreement on the establishment of a NATO Liaison Office in Chisinau.⁵⁹¹ More importantly, during the press conference where the announcement was made, Secretary General of NATO, Jens Stoltenberg reiterated NATO's position that it "respects (...) Moldova's territorial independence, integrity and sovereignty and NATO allies do not, and will not, recognise Transnistria."⁵⁹²

Therefore, one could argue that Romania and Moldova have found an equilibrium in the relationship – Romania acts as a supporter and advocates the cause of Moldova, keeping the issue of Transnistria on the international agenda, while Moldova remains committed to pursuing a pro-Western agenda. The diplomatic relationship having improved significantly, Romania also supports Moldova's disentanglement from Russia by providing financial aid and an alternative source of energy imports.⁵⁹³ That being said, the internal issues which in the transition period complicated Bucharest-Chisinau

⁵⁸⁹ L. Bogdan, 'Ambasadorul rus la UE: Rusia nu intentioneaza sa anexeze Transnistria sau orice alta regiune din lume [Russian Ambassador to the EU: Russia Does Not Intend to Annex Transnistria or Any Other Region of the World],' *Mediafax*, 17.04.2014, <http://www.mediafax.ro/externe/ambasadorul-rus-la-ue-rusia-nu-intentioneaza-sa-anexeze-transnistria-sau-orice-alta-regiune-din-lume-12481474> [accessed 14 January 2016].

⁵⁹⁰ See, for instance, President Iohannis' statement after the conclusion of the NATO Summit in Warsaw (2016).

⁵⁹¹ Announcement by Secretary General of NATO Stoltenberg, in NATO, *Joint Press Point – with NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg and the Prime Minister of the Republic of Moldova, Pavel Filip*, 29.11.2016, http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/opinions_138326.htm?selectedLocale=en [accessed 29 December 2016].

⁵⁹² Ibid.

⁵⁹³ Inayeh (2015), p.41.

interaction are making a comeback in Moldova's domestic politics. Without going into too much detail, a severe case of embezzlement which translated into the 'disappearance' of 1 billion euros from its banking system in 2014, led to the fall of Moldova's pro-European government and the prosecution of its prime-minister. A period of chaos was followed, in early 2016, by the establishment of a new government put together by a local oligarch, Vladimir Plahotnyuk (suspected to have been, at least in part, responsible for the theft), which was met with violent protests in Chisinau, organized by both pro-Russian and pro-Western and Unionist factions.⁵⁹⁴ The consequences of these internal events are two-fold and have significant implications for Moldova's current and future foreign policy direction.

Firstly, disillusionment with the accused governments has resulted in a surge of support for the parties which favour closer ties with Moscow, now in opposition. According to an IPP poll from November 2015, a combined total of 50% of the population would vote for one of three pro-Russian parties –Our Party, the Party of Socialists of the Republic of Moldova, and the Party of Communists.⁵⁹⁵ A similar poll from April 2016 showed Igor Dodon, the leader of the Socialists, to be the popular front runner for the position of president (29.3%), while support for the three parties is at 55%.⁵⁹⁶ Since then Dodon won the presidential elections which took place in Moldova in November 2016, confirming the population's shift to the left and, consequently, the East. Although by the time of writing, the president-elect has yet to be invested and Moldova's leadership is provided by Pavel Filat's pro-European coalition, it is beyond doubt that this election and, were the result to repeat itself, the parliamentary elections expected to take place next year might destabilise this new found equilibrium in Moldo-Romanian relations.

⁵⁹⁴ V. Josu, and J. Hawk, 'The Economic and Political Crisis in Moldova,' *South Front*, published in *Global Research*, 24.01.2016, <http://www.globalresearch.ca/the-economic-and-political-crisis-in-moldova/5503229> [accessed 03 June 2016].

⁵⁹⁵ Institutul de Politici Publice [Institute for Public policy] (Republic of Moldova), *Barometrul Opiniei Publice – noiembrie 2015* [Barometer of Public Opinion – November 2015], 08.12.2015, p.23, <http://www.ipp.md/libview.php?l=en&id=760&idc=156> [accessed 01 May 2016].

⁵⁹⁶ Institutul de Politici Publice [Institute for Public policy] (Republic of Moldova), *Barometrul Opiniei Publice – aprilie 2016* [Barometer of Public Opinion – April 2016], 04.05.2016, pp. 40 & 47, http://ipp.md/public/files/Barometru/BOP_04.2016_prima_parte_finale-r.pdf [accessed 20 June 2016].

These are the types of change in circumstances which this project has argued lead to an augmentation of identity anxieties and this was, indeed, the case, on both sides of the Prut. In Romania, the elections were intensely mediated, including in the national news agency, *Agerpres*. Although Romania's position towards the two candidates – Dodon for the pro-Russians and Maia Sandu for the pro-Europeans – was officially neutral, the affinity of the former towards Moscow and his various statements confirming it, such as the fact that as president he would visit first Moscow, then Brussels and only afterwards Bucharest,⁵⁹⁷ were emphasised. As for Moldova itself, this shift to the left has been countered by a resurgence of pro-Romanian attitudes. In a context in which trust in the political class in Moldova is at an all time low – in the April survey 49% of the population answered it trusted none of Moldova's political figures⁵⁹⁸ – a grass roots organisation has been set up to rebuild the state's connection with Romania. The movement, called the Civic Platform 'Action 2012,' is comprised of pro-unionist NGOs from Romania, Moldova, the US and several European countries, and proposes a two-pronged political and social plan which would see unification achieved in 2018.⁵⁹⁹ The platform encourages the set up of a framework in both states which could administratively manage the unification project. In 2015, for instance, it lobbied Bucharest for the establishment of institutions which would ease the process – a presidential commission tasked with analysing the impact of unification, a permanent joint Moldo-Romanian parliamentary commission and a Republic of Moldova Office, directly subordinated to the prime-minister.⁶⁰⁰ On the social side, the platform is appealing to the public on both sides of the border to strengthen links between the two states. Upon signing up to the project, individuals

⁵⁹⁷ Agerpres, *Cetatenii Republicii Moldova isi aleg presedintele, intr-un scrutin al carui rezultat depinde de rata participarii la urne* [Moldovan Citizens Choose their President in an Election in which the Result Depends on Turnout], 11.11.2016, <http://www.agerpres.ro/externe/2016/11/11/cetatenii-republicii-moldova-isi-aleg-presedintele-intr-un-scrutin-al-carui-rezultat-depinde-de-rata-de-participare-la-urne-13-41-59> [accessed 11 November 2016].

⁵⁹⁸ IPP Barometer (April 2016), p.36.

⁵⁹⁹ Unionist Platform 'Action 2012,' *Official Website*, <http://actiunea2012.ro> [accessed 20 June 2016].

⁶⁰⁰ Agerpres, *Platforma unionista 'Actiunea 2012' solicita infiintarea unor institutii responsabile de gestionarea relatiei cu Republica Moldova* [Unionist Platform 'Action 2012' Requests the Establishing of Institutions Responsible with Managing Relations with the Republic of Moldova], 12.07.2015, <http://www.agerpres.ro/social/2015/07/12/platforma-unionista-actiunea-2012-solicita-infiintarea-unor-institutii-responsabile-de-gestionarea-relatiei-cu-republica-moldova-17-26-50> [accessed 20 June 2016].

are suggested to undertake various ‘actions,’ which range from Romanian language book donations towards the Republic, to lobbying local councillors to twin their town with one in Moldova, a pen-pal program, to name but a few.⁶⁰¹ In short, whilst at a political level the platform is engaging with state government, at the social level it is pursuing a softer bottom-up approach meant to bring Romanian values into Moldovan daily life and construct personal relationships between individuals and communities.

Overall this endeavour shows that there is appetite, at least in certain circles, for the development of Moldo-Romanian relations, and perhaps even towards the achievement of the main prerogative set by the Romanian identity narrative – unity. Although it is certainly difficult to foresee how the relationship between Bucharest and Chisinau will be impacted by recent regional and domestic developments, the identitary perspective employed here would suggest that Moldova’s ambivalence towards its identity may now act as an enabler rather than an obstacle. That is because Romania may still harness its special relationship with Moldova, and the hesitation noticeable at societal and political levels of turning fully towards Russia, as well as its position within the EU and NATO, to draw Moldova towards the West. What is clear, however, is that, because the main reference point in the articulation of its agenda towards Moldova is their identity-based affinity, Romania is likely to remain resolute in its endeavour to keep its neighbour close. This is all the more the case as anxieties concerning both the situation in Ukraine and pro-Russian attitudes within Moldova have heightened. As Inayeh points out, Romanians “are wary of potential moves on Southern Bessarabia”⁶⁰² and this is one of its main motivators for action. Moldova is increasingly perceived as a Besieged Fortress and concerns towards its future can only be answered through Bucharest offering it support.

Future Directions for Moldo-Romanian Relations

This section will examine some of the directions relations between Romania and Moldova may take and, in turn, their repercussions on the stability and security of the

⁶⁰¹ On their website, the Platform advertises ‘100 Actions’ to bring forth the union. See www.Actiunea2012.ro.

⁶⁰² Inayeh (2015), p.42.

region, but also their potential impact on relations between both these actors and Russia, on the one hand, and the Western community, on the other. This analysis must be set in the peculiar context of Romania and Moldova's status within Eastern Europe: whilst one is an increasingly active member of the EU and NATO on the Eastern flank, the other is in the CIS, part of the Russian sphere. As a result, in a setting of growing tensions between East and West, here are two actors with a special relationship, which one may call kin-states, on opposite sides. This means, on the one hand, that Romania has significant commitments towards its partners, but also an individual interest in the fate of an actor external to these alliances. On the other hand, it also implies that the developments in Ukraine create additional anxieties for Romania regarding Moldova's future to that of its allies. That is because Romania views Moldova as an Estranged Self, and therefore projects, to a certain extent, its own prerogative over ensuring the physical security of the state to its neighbour. The main types of scenarios being considered in both Bucharest and Chisinau concern Russia's own strategic agenda for expansion of either its territory or regional influence, both of which have repercussions in terms of the themes of Besieged Fortress and Unity.

A soft scenario concerns a potential diplomatic resolution of both the Ukrainian crisis and the Transnistrian frozen conflict through federalisation, or in any case, a power-sharing agreement which would see pro-Russian forces from the separatist regions of Donbas and Transnistria have access to the leadership structures of these two states. Whether the federalisation of Ukraine would be achieved first and would result in pressure on the Transnistrian question to be resolved in a similar manner,⁶⁰³ or the power shift in Chisinau may cause the situation to be reversed, as was argued recently by Moldovan political analyst Oazu Nantoi,⁶⁰⁴ is somewhat inconsequential. What is significant is the outcome, which would see, as the latter has noted, "the Republic of Moldova [transformed] in a pseudo-state, paralysed from the inside and controlled by

⁶⁰³ Traian Basescu makes this point as early as 2014, whilst Dan Dungaciu reiterates in 2016; See chapter 5 for details.

⁶⁰⁴ Digi24.ro, 'Oazu Nantoi: Federatia Rusa nu are nevoie de Transnistria, ci de toata Republica Moldova [Oazu Nantoi: The Russian Federation Does Not Need Transnistria, But the Republic of Moldova as a Whole],' *Timputul*, 19.12.2016, <http://www.timputul.md/articol/oazu-nantoi-federatia-rusa-nu-are-nevoie-de-transnistria-ci-de-toata-republica-moldova-101856.html> [accessed 29 December 2016].

Russia from the outside.”⁶⁰⁵ The impact of this development, in identity terms, would be catastrophic for Moldo-Romanian relations, but also for the Romanian consciousness.

The special relation this state has established with its neighbour would likely be terminated in such circumstances, as Moldova turned to the East. More importantly, this would impact on the Self most prominently. Romania’s inability to protect an actor the relationship with whom is viewed as “an extremely important national objective,”⁶⁰⁶ would reveal its small-state condition once more and its lack of strength vis-à-vis Russia. In a sense, a breakdown of relations between Romanian and Moldova would be tantamount to another ‘loss’ of Bessarabia as the lyrics at the beginning of this chapter described it. Subscribed to the theme of Besieged Fortress, and irreparably damaging the ongoing national project of building links with this state, this is a worst case scenario. The repercussions of such a development on regional stability in terms of the expansion of the Russian sphere of influence are difficult to foresee and it is likewise problematic to envisage Romania’s reaction. What is clear, however, is that this would have a significant impact on Romania’s relationship with Moscow, but may also lead to a hardening of its position within NATO – again as a form of resistance to siege – whilst support for pro-European factions in Moldova would likely continue. The notion of a stand-off between Romania and Russia on the border of the River Prut is not impossible to envisage. Nantoi captures this risk well when he argues that Romania should be careful in managing this situation lest it may soon be confronted with “Russian soldiers along the River Prut.”⁶⁰⁷

Having said that, a second, hard scenario is also being considered. This concerns a potential military invasion of Ukraine or a reactivation of the frozen conflict in Transnistria, either of which would put Moldova’s sovereignty directly at risk. For instance, the notion that Transnistria could be utilised by Moscow in its standoff with NATO and the conflict in Ukraine is one which worries both Chisinau and Bucharest. Popescu and Litra point out that “Russia has also raised the possibility of deploying a

⁶⁰⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁰⁶ Anonymous C (2014).

⁶⁰⁷ Nantoi (2016).

radar station in Transnistria to counter the Romania-based US elements of the Anti-Ballistic Missile shield. And there have been reports that the Russian peacekeeping force could be turned into a military base in Transnistria.”⁶⁰⁸ More recently, Moldovan news agency *Publika* highlighted the possibility that Ukraine could be attacked by Russia from the direction of its border with Transnistria.⁶⁰⁹ Overall, the fact that Moldova has foreign troops on its territory which could be fashioned into an invasion force or a bastion against NATO is a worrying prospect – Moldova could offer a gateway for a Russian invasion of Odessa, whilst Transnistria’s proximity to Romania would make it an ideal base for Russian retaliation against increased NATO presence in the region. In any case, it is questionable whether in an escalation of the situation in Ukraine the fragile stalemate between Chisinau and Tiraspol could hold, particularly taking into account Transnistria’s own agenda of annexing itself to Russia.

In these circumstances, a war between Moldova and the separatist region is not out of the question and this would pose a serious question for Romania in terms of response, as any perceived danger to Moldova’s stability and sovereignty would result in an augmentation of the theme of Besieged Fortress and Romania would feel compelled to react. Whilst the military solution has never seriously been on the cards – after all, Romania did not intervene in 1992 – a potential solution might be offered by an *ad hoc* unification between the two states, which would effectively put Moldova under the protective umbrella of Romania’s international allies. Roman Mihaies, a political scientist in Chisinau has argued that:

Unification may take place only in the context of a humanitarian catastrophe in the Republic of Moldova, such as a war with separatist Transnistria (...), and the international community and great powers would be faced with the task of saving the population, one of the solutions being a rapid unification with Romania.⁶¹⁰

⁶⁰⁸ Popescu and Litra (2012), p.5.

⁶⁰⁹ Publika, Avertisment: Rusia ar putea ataca Ucraina din directia regiunii transnistrene [Warning: Russia May Attack Ukraine from the Direction of Transnistria], 28.05.2015, http://www.publika.md/avertisment-rusia-ar-putea-ataca-ucraina-din-directia-regiunii-transnistrene_2317861.html [accessed 29 December 2016].

⁶¹⁰ Unionist Platform ‘Action 2012’, Interview with Roman Mihaies – ‘In caz de razboi, Romania si Republica Moldova s-ar putea uni [In Case of War, Romania and the Republic of Moldova May Unite],’ *Ziare*, 13.09.2014, <http://www.ziare.com/europa/moldova/in-caz-de-razboi-romania-si-rep-moldova-s-ar-putea-uni-interviu-1321146> [accessed 03 June 2016].

This may seem an implausible scenario; however, the reasons why it should not be discounted from an identity perspective rest on Moldova's ambivalence towards its 'Romanian' identity. Panici's 2003 assessment that Moldovan parties continue "to form a spectrum ranging from those supporting some form of political union with Romania, those in favour of independence, to those desiring some degree of reintegration with Russia and the former Soviet republics"⁶¹¹ still holds true today. The issue of unification becomes a matter of balance between these directions and historical experience has shown that in times of crisis, such as the disintegration of the Soviet Union, Moldovan pro-Romanian attitudes are likely to emerge. It may just be that the risk posed by an outbreak of conflict in Transnistria would tip the balance in the favour of unification, as Mihaies implies. This would be a possible response to besiegement and, for Romania, it would satisfy two identity-related priorities: it would serve to bring Moldova out of Russia's sphere once and for all and ensure its security, but would also satisfy the main prerogative dictated by the theme of Unity. Therefore, from an identity perspective, the scenario is indeed plausible particularly in a context of volatility, as the issue depends largely on Moldova's position on unification. As Anonymous C argues, the perception is that "reunification can be achieved tomorrow if there is consensus between Bucharest and Chisinau."⁶¹²

The matter is increasingly being considered in Romanian and Moldovan circles. The Unionist Platform 'Action 2012' is a manifestation of these developments. Likewise, in Romania increasing numbers of Romanian politicians and commentators are discussing the issue of unification. Former president Traian Basescu, now leader of the Popular Movement Party, has assumed the unification with Moldova as a primary national objective of his political formation and has acquired, at their first election, 26 seats in the Romanian Parliament (proportional to just under 5.5% of the vote).⁶¹³ This, coupled with the fact that in July 2015, 67.8% of the Romanian population supported

⁶¹¹ Panici (2003), p.44

⁶¹² Anonymous C (2014).

⁶¹³ K. Olteanu, 'Retrospectiva 2016: Alegerile locale si parlamentare in prim-plan politic [Retrospective 2016: Local and General Elections in the Political Foreground,' *Agerpres*, <http://www.agerpres.ro/politica/2016/12/30/retrospectiva-2016-alegerile-locale-si-parlamentare-in-prim-plan-politic-formarea-guvernului-in-2017-cu-prim-ministru-desemnata-la-a-doua-propunere-16-53-17> [accessed 30 December 2016].

Action 2012's goal of re-unification in 2018⁶¹⁴ is telling of the fact that platforms such as his are gathering momentum.

Whilst unification may lead to an alleviation of anxieties caused by the augmentation of the theme of Besieged Fortress, and satisfy for Romania the prerogative of Unity, the implications for regional stability and the state's relationship with its allies and Russia may be severe. The position of the US on the matter was hinted at when the ambassador to Chisinau said that unification would not be practical or a real solution to Moldova's problems.⁶¹⁵ Whilst NATO has bolstered its relations with Chisinau over recent years, not least through the establishment of the Liaison Office mentioned previously, it has shown in the past that its appetite for cooperation with states within Russia's sphere of influence is limited by its desire to maintain a non-conflictual relationship with Moscow. Certainly Russia's intervention in Georgia in 2008 settled the issue of that state achieving NATO membership. As such, a unification between Romania and Moldova would further complicate an already difficult co-existence in the Black Sea region. For the EU's part, equally, an unplanned enlargement in the East would bring untold consequences. One of the interviewees believes that the European integration of Moldova as part of Romania would be actively supported by the EU, as through its Cohesion Fund "poorer regions of the Republic would be prioritised ahead of other less developed regions [of Europe, presumably]."⁶¹⁶ However, in a European Union already suffering from enlargement fatigue and the rise of a pan-continental trend of Euroscepticism doubled by pro-Russian attitudes, as well as under strain from the refugee crisis, one would suggest it is unlikely that the organisation would welcome this territorial expansion, especially if it were faced with a *fait accompli*.

It follows, therefore, that the unification project may have complex repercussions on both EU and NATO relations with Russia, but also on Romania's own relations with its Western allies. The stability and security of the region may, itself, be put under threat. Romania, however, may not be sensitive to these potential issues because the matter of unification is perceived as legitimate and a crucial identity-related goal. To put it

⁶¹⁴ INSCOP (July 2015).

⁶¹⁵ According to Luca (2016).

⁶¹⁶ Anonymous C (2014)

another way, this may be another matter of ordering priorities – if in transition Romania sacrificed good relations with a difficult government in Chisinau to prioritise accession, now it may be that the goal of protecting Moldova and achieving unity takes precedence over its international commitments. The fact that a reordering of identity-related priorities may occur in the opportune context is one of the main assumptions of this thesis and perceptions over a Moldova under threat would create just such circumstances.

This reality, this chapter argues, should worry the international community, because of Romania's geopolitical position on the fringes of the EU and NATO and at the border between the European East and West. To downplay this second scenario, however implausible it may seem now, is to ignore the fact that Romania's actions may critically alter the weak equilibrium and stand-off which exists between the Russian Federation and the Euro-Atlantic partners. On the other hand, Romania's suspicion of the federal solution hints at a risk which is downplayed by the international community, namely that, whilst power sharing may on the face of it settle the conflicts in Ukraine and Moldova, it would also inherently offer Russia an avenue for buttressing its sphere of influence. This would have severely impact the balance of power within Eastern Europe and diminish the allies' capacity to counter any further expansionist moves. It would also, one would argue, impact Romania's consistent pro-American and Europhile attitude. As Gusa has noted, Romania is at the moment, "probably the most pro-American state in Europe,"⁶¹⁷ whilst polls consistently show that the Eurosceptic trend sweeping the continent has yet to affect it.⁶¹⁸ However, if there is one way in which to alienate such an otherwise reliable ally, it is to downplay or ignore the situation of Moldova, the fate of whom is at the very top of Romania's foreign policy agenda, alongside ensuring its own security. At the very least at societal level a 'loss of Bessarabia' would be a catastrophe, and some of the blame would likely be laid squarely at the door of the international community.

⁶¹⁷ Gusa (2015), p.225.

⁶¹⁸ European Commission (2014), *Standard Eurobarometer 82/Autumn 2014 – Opinia Publica in Uniunea Europeana [Public Opinion in the European Union] National Report –Romania*, http://ec.europa.eu/public_opinion/archives/eb/eb82/eb82_ro_ro_nat.pdf [accessed 13 July 2015].

Conclusion

In conclusion, this chapter has explored the identitary affinity Romania has towards the Republic of Moldova and how this has shaped the state's behaviour towards it. The identity-based perspective employed by this project offers an alternative avenue for understanding the nature and roots of this relationship. In terms of the main research question, the attitude of affinity towards Moldova, based on its historically enduring portrayal as an Estranged Self, has fed into Romanian behaviour through its commitment to ensure the pro-Western course of its neighbour and the bolstering of their relationship. However, this chapter also confirms the assumptions of this thesis that identity-related goals may become deprioritised in specific contexts – an example of this is the abandonment of the goal of unification in the 1990s. Having said that, Romania's Euro-Atlantic integration, and the more recent regional developments have risen Moldova to the top of Romania's foreign policy agenda, substantiating the endurance of this affinity. In this relationship one may see most clearly Romania's ability to pursue specific goals which, whilst they may be in alignment with the position of its allies, are motivated by its individual, identity-based prerogatives. Projecting these prerogatives concerning the Self onto the Republic of Moldova means that the developments in Ukraine reflect in anxieties regarding Moldovan security, independence and sovereignty, augmenting perceptions of the Estranged Self as a Besieged Fortress. Importantly, these challenges are seen not only as Moldova's own, but Romania's as well, and this has impacted the latter's stance on Russian expansionism and strengthened its commitment towards Chisinau.

The pattern of behaviour noticeable here follows the rationale dictated by Romania's identity-based priorities, of keeping Moldova close to itself and the West, while countering Russian influence over it, through harnessing its position within the EU and NATO. Having said that, the unification scenario, increasingly considered in Bucharest, confirms the thesis' early assumptions on the state's capacity to pursue directions which may diverge from those of its allies. From this, both Romania and Moldova may become sources of regional instability, contingent on future developments, particularly within Moldovan domestic politics and Transnistria. Whether the behaviour of two

small states may upset the equilibrium of Eastern Europe and complicate relations between the Euro-Atlantic organisations and Russia more generally, remains to be seen. What one would argue, however, is that the existence of kin states on either side of this growing rift between East and West should be a cause for concern for all involved.

Conclusion

*A people abandoned at the juncture of storms which strike here century after century and will always blow over these lands of plenty and in the path of marching armies. Child of Rome lost in the wilderness forever renewed by barbarians, so few amongst so many. (...) Any others would have scattered across the world. Sweet homelands have been deserted for less. We remain. Sword in hand and on guard (...). And here we are, still at home!*⁶¹⁹

This thesis aimed to answer the question ‘What is the impact of national identity on Romania’s post-socialist foreign policy agenda?’ As such, it has engaged with the development of this state’s national identity narrative, the sources of its continuity and sedimentation of its main themes, and the manner in which it has influenced, in its present version, Romania’s international behaviour since the anti-socialist revolution of 1989. The task was complex, not least because of the inter-disciplinary nature of the study proposed. However, the present thesis has highlighted the complexity behind this state’s motivations for action and, more importantly, the role played by identity narratives in the articulation of national interest and directions for foreign policy. At the end of this endeavour, it is important to take stock of the main arguments one might draw from the analysis presented and their contribution to the broader field.

Working in the area of overlap between SC and FPA meant adopting a hybrid approach which offered particular insight into the study of the influence of enduring claims about national identity on Romania’s international behaviour and agenda. The study took from critical constructivist/poststructuralist FPA the conception of identity as a discursive structure and developed a narrative theory of national identity, in which stories about the Self and Others provide the lens through which states view the world and their place within it. The thesis adopted a concern with the development of the Romanian identity narrative and the reasons behind its continuity. By highlighting the

⁶¹⁹ N. Iorga, ‘Cetind Istoria Romanilor [Reading Romanians’ History],’ *Neamul Romanesc* XXXV:136 (23.06.1940), in G. Ivascu, and A. Tanasescu (eds.), *Cumpăna Cuvântului 1939-1945 [The Sweep of the Word 1939-1945]* (Bucharest: Eminescu, 1977), p.183.

telling of history as the main vehicle for the socialisation of the identity narrative, the project argued that stories about 'who we were' legitimate particular representations of the Self, its interests and relationships with Others which are relevant in contemporary circumstances. By examining the link between the historical narrative and identity construction, the project outlined the main themes of the Romanian identity narrative as the Foundation Myths, and those of Besieged Fortress and Unity. These themes play a critical role in the portrayal of the Romanian Self, but also in that of its significant Others, the image of whom is generated through processes of differentiation and association. On the other hand, drawing on SC and its express interest into how culture influences state behaviour, but also on the work of Waever and Hansen, the thesis adopts a more structuralist approach than most critical constructivists and poststructuralists. This is expressed in the view that the structures of identity narratives, social constructs though they are, may become entrenched when reproduced over long periods of time. As such, they are especially resilient to change and difficult to displace under the action of agents, offering the narratives particular stability, relative to the degree of their sedimentation. It is from this that the project draws its assumption that identity narrative structures can and do have an influence on state behaviour. The thesis has shown identity-related factors to impact not only the strategic sphere, SC's main concern, but general state behaviour as well. That is not to say that the strategic dimension was ignored; to the contrary, in Romania's relationship with NATO during transition and with Russia in the current context, the use of force and militarisation were revealed as important tools in Romania's securing of its national objectives. In other areas, however, such as in the relationship with Hungary and Moldova, or in its general pro-Western direction, the thesis has emphasised the influence of identity-related considerations on Romania's foreign policy behaviour more broadly, bringing the study closer to the more expansive agenda of FPA.

By positioning itself in the middle ground on the structure-agency debate and emphasising the processes of socialisation and sedimentation of identity narratives the project was able to account for the cross-generational consistency of the Romanian narrative, whilst still ascribing agency a specific and important role. This approach has

allowed the thesis to examine both agents' interaction with the structure of the identity narrative, with a focus on the regimes of Ceausescu and Iliescu, as well as the manner in which the narrative, in turn, impacted the perceptions and actions of agents. By arguing that the structure of the Romanian identity narrative is enduring and recognising the fact that agents are, themselves, socialised in a particular version of it, the thesis has contended that agents are limited in their ability to alter the structure drastically. Acknowledging the relation between the two as such allowed the project to explain what types of alterations were possible, such as Ceausescu's emphasising of character uniqueness and Unity, or Iliescu's elimination of the communist component, and which were impossible because they deviated too much from the original version, such as the attempts at Russification and the portrayal of Russia as a friend during the 1950s. Working in this middle ground has the implication that, whilst changes to the narrative are possible, they are not a necessity and, indeed, in the Romanian case, this explains the continuity of the identity narrative along its major features.

Following on from this, functioning at the crossroads between SC and FPA allowed the thesis to explore the connection between elites and the broader society, as members of a community socialised in a particular version of the identity narrative. The project showed how, when it came to identity-driven prerogatives, there tended to be consistent alignment between the position of Romanian elites and that of the general population. The unanimous desire to join the West, the deep-seeded anti-Russian sentiments, distrust of Hungary or affinity towards Moldova are all examples of such instances. Additionally, we have seen that, if elites try to deviate from the general position, as was the case with the treaty negotiations with Russia in 1996, societal pressure may be powerful enough to force them to change course. Therefore, the pursuit of identity-based prerogatives in the Romanian case is often a matter of maintaining domestic legitimacy, limiting elites' freedom of action. The thesis argues, much in the spirit of Doty's *how possible* questions,⁶²⁰ that entrenched identity narratives create red-lines which governments may not cross, lest their legitimacy be severely damaged. This view has offered additional insight in Romania's pursuit of a

⁶²⁰ Doty (1993).

hard-line approach to Russia and its efforts to limit Hungarian interference in its domestic affairs, as well as the endeavours to establish closer relations with the Republic of Moldova.

On a different note, the identitary approach employed by this project has provided an avenue for offering alternative, identity-related explanations for Romania's behaviour, both internationally and domestically. In the transition period, for instance, the thesis adds another dimension to the discussion surrounding Romania's staggered progress on domestic reform, and its unwillingness to allow for outside interference in the minority question, which it perceived as an internal affair. The notion that anxiety towards changes to the *status quo* and a limitation of state sovereignty were not only Iliescu's communist automatisms but they were attitudes in play at societal level explains not only his electoral success during the period, but also why Romania found negotiating the transition period so difficult in the first half of the 1990s. Similarly, in Romania's contemporary behaviour towards Russia, Hungary and Moldova, one does not notice solely alignment to the position pursued by its allies, but the influence of individual specific identity-related goals. Therefore, the thesis argues that there exists a pattern of behaviour in all these instances which conforms to Romania's identity-based prerogatives. In the case of Russia, this manifests as a hard-line approach to its perceived expansionism, in which the state is harnessing its strategic position on the edge of NATO. With Hungary, the pattern consists of an effort to distance Romania from this actor whilst maintaining the veneer of cooperation dictated by their membership to the EU and NATO. Finally, with the Republic of Moldova, it consists of attempts to strengthen the links between this state and the West, including Romania, whilst drawing it out of Russia's shadow. This pattern of behaviour, although apparent in the empirical evidence, cannot be accurately accounted for, one would argue, without an understanding of the identity dimension.

A novel element offered by this thesis, which stems from its constructivist approach, is the analysis of the retreat/augmentation of identity-related factors. In acknowledging that their influence on behaviour is not consistent, but contingent on external circumstances, or perceptions over these, and agents' priorities, allowed the thesis to

trace the manner in which particular identity-related anxieties or goals receded or re-emerged in specific contexts. Examples of these are the retreat of anxieties towards change during transition, the abandonment of the goal of reunification with the Republic of Moldova, or the détente with Hungary, during the 1990s. In those instances, changes in the situation, namely the quality of life under Iliescu's regime, and the coming to power of communists in the Republic of Moldova and the socialists in Hungary, triggered a reordering of priorities in which, incidentally the same in all three situations, the goal of Euro-Atlantic integration took precedence over other identity-related considerations. However, the thesis has also shown how, in the current climate, Hungary's eastern shift, Russia's actions in Ukraine and even Moldova's own questions about its identity have led to a re-emergence of these elements, resulting in the pattern of behaviour outlined above. In effect, what the analysis presented here has demonstrated is that, whilst identity-related factors may move to the background with changes in the environment, because of the sedimentation of the Romanian identity narrative, these attitudes are liable to be reactivated in opportune circumstances. That is why the thesis argues the issue of unification with Moldova, whether approved by its Euro-Atlantic partners or not, is not an option which cannot be taken off the table, as it is rooted in profound conceptions on the role of the state to provide security and in the prerogatives set by the theme of Unity.

Finally, following on from the points above and building on the works of Rasmussen and Browning,⁶²¹ the aim of this thesis was also to show that the study of small states, such as Romania, is a useful endeavour as minor powers are not only capable of developing powerful identity narratives which influence their behaviour, but that, in volatile environments such as that of Eastern Europe today, their actions may have a bearing on regional stability. Indeed, the thesis has shown how Romania is acting autonomously vis-à-vis Hungary, straining an already tense relationship. Equally, in relation to Russia and Moldova, Romania is harnessing its position within the EU and, especially, NATO, and taking initiative in both efforts to counter Russia and to draw Moldova closer to the West. However, Romania has also shown itself willing to go

⁶²¹ Rasmussen (2005), Browning (2006, 2007, 2008, 2010).

against the grain, in adopting a harder stance against Russia than many of its Western and Eastern European partners and in considering, at least in certain circles, the possibility of a reunification with the Republic of Moldova. In this vein, it is apparent that this state is motivated by a more complex rationale than traditional accounts would assume. Therefore, understanding Romania's pattern of behaviour and the reasons behind it becomes a useful and important endeavour in light of its potential repercussions on regional stability.

The notion of Romania as an autonomous actor, whose agenda is not solely dictated by the direction pursued by its allies, implies a certain level of unpredictability of its future behaviour from the perspective of mainstream FPA accounts. However, working at the intersection of constructivist SC and FPA and adopting an identity-based perspective offers the type of insight which makes Romania's behaviour intelligible and, therefore, to a certain extent, predictable. The final section of each case study chapter offers just such predictions, based on the continuation of current circumstances and in reference to the scenarios being considered in Romania at the moment. What these scenarios capture is the heightened level of anxiety concerning recent developments and their potential consequences on what Romanians view as their national interests. As such, they offer hints at both the likelihood that identity-driven prerogatives will continue to be crucial in the articulation of Romania's future foreign policy agenda, but also at the types of behaviour which are viewed as possible or impossible. Abandoning the Republic of Moldova in the case of the outbreak of war with Transnistria, for instance, is a red-line. So too is adopting a more moderate stance towards Russia and Hungary. What the balance will be between identity anxieties and priorities, on the one hand, and external pressure, on the other, is difficult to foresee. It is, nonetheless the case, this thesis ultimately argues, that Romania is playing an increasingly important role in the region and, in these circumstances, the identity dimension of this small state's foreign policy agenda and the complexes it creates should be of interest to observers.

Final Considerations

There are few final issues which should be addressed. These concern particular questions which could be raised over the utility of the approach employed here and its potential application to other case studies. The first point relates to the relative strength of identity-based considerations compared to that of other factors, most notably external pressures, or more pragmatic reasons for adopting a particular course of action, such as economic benefits. There are certainly, particularly in transition, instances when Romanians wanted something but could not achieve it – e.g. unification with Moldova – or did not want something but did it anyway – e.g. the Principal Treaty with Hungary. In this vein, the thesis has accepted that identity-based goals can be de-prioritised if situations are not opportune. It could, however, be that actors actually have broad discretion in ordering preferences and prioritising pragmatic goals allowed or forced by external circumstances over identity-based ones. This is a difficult issue, because, if the former always supersedes the latter in importance, then an identity-based approach can never offer a convincing explanation for behaviour. Rather, a materialist account would be sufficient.

To this one would respond that the ordering of preferences, or what is perceived as possible or permissible in a certain context, depends as much on external circumstances as it does on the salience of identity factors at that point in time. In other words, the stronger the latter are, the less likely they are to be overridden by other considerations. For instance, during the early 1990s there was considerable pressure on Romania to reach agreement with Hungary over signing a Principal Treaty which would normalise relations and settle the minority question, but identity-based anxieties over the limiting of its sovereignty and the involvement of Budapest in its internal affairs prevented it from doing so. It was known that this would result in a slowing of Romania's accession process; in other words, failure to sign a treaty would have an objectively negative effect on its integration prospects, but this pressure was insufficient to cause its leadership to change course. The ambivalence over priorities in transition was only solved later on, when these anxieties receded and accession became the predominant goal. From this, one would make the conjecture that

external circumstances may, indeed, lead to a re-ordering of priorities but that the context must be as such as to firstly allow for the retreat of the identity-based anxieties. The same, one would argue, was the case with unification with Moldova, where there existed a will, but the perception was that it was stronger on the Romanian side than on Moldova's. Ultimately, the will remains but, since it takes two to tango, the achievement of unification is contingent on Moldova's decision on this course. In other words, the salience of this prerogative is not sufficient to override external pressures because of Moldova's ambivalence and this remains the case to this very day. Overall, however, and as has been pointed out throughout, in current circumstances of heightened anxieties, particularly surrounding the area of state security, identity considerations are increasingly becoming the main reference points for action, making them more difficult to supplant by other factors.

A second issue, which builds to some extent on the issue above, relates to the notion that claims about identity are, indeed, enduring and have an impact on behaviour or, conversely, they are more of an instrument utilised by actors in legitimating their actions. This connects, to an extent, to the agency-structure debate. The view of this thesis has been that, because agents are within rather than without society, they are in themselves socialised in a particular version of the identity narrative which limits their capacity to interact with it, in terms of altering it drastically. There are, of course, instances when agents have utilised identity prerogatives for their own benefit, as was the case with Iliescu's handling of the 1990 campaign. This, however, does not mean that they are subtracted or outside the influence of the narrative altogether. If anything, Iliescu's conservative approach to reform shows that he suffered from post-revolutionary identity inertia more than most. There are other instances, however, where there seems to have been a drastic departure from the original narrative. Although it is difficult to find such an instance in the Romanian case, it is worth considering that of Hungary under Viktor Orban. Although the particularities of the Hungarian case are not the direct remit of this thesis, it does seem somewhat peculiar, under the assumptions of this project, that Orban's eastern shift was permissible. After all, Hungary's interaction with Russia has been troubled, not least because of the latter's invasion of 1956 after the Hungarian revolution. In these circumstances it is

difficult to imagine how Orbán might have legitimated a close relationship with Russia at domestic level, unless there is a significant malleability of the structure of the identity narrative. This is all the more the case as the eastern shift was coupled with a pronounced nationalist rhetoric which corresponds to identity complexes related to the trauma of the Treaty of Trianon (1920) and the territorial losses subsequent to it.

To this one would answer that the key is in the nature of interaction with the structure of the identity narrative and, specifically, an ordering of identity-based priorities, similar in effect to what Ceausescu achieved in Romania. For Orbán, the corner-stone of his regime is the 'new nationalism,' with its emphasis on building links with the Hungarian diasporas in neighbouring countries and healing, to a certain extent, the wounds of Trianon. In other words, Orbán's regime has a very strong identity-related component. The refashioning of a greater Hungarian nation, whether physically or spiritually, would seem to be a priority and from this stems the antagonism with Romania and its other neighbours. It is also clear, however, that such a position is somewhat antagonistic with the principles on which the EU and NATO are built, particularly surrounding respect of other states' sovereignty and borders. Russia, on the other hand, has shown itself much more amenable to questioning the current shape and structure of Eastern Europe and offers a dogmatic avenue in alignment with Hungary's own. In this sense, one would argue, Orbán may legitimate friendship with Russia as necessary for the attainment of Hungary's primary goal of bringing the Hungarian nation closer together. In other words, he may reshuffle the order of priorities in such a way as to make the move permissible. In this instance, Russia may not be a foe but a friend to Hungary. Having said that, one would argue that such a change in direction would not be possible in Romania, if similar consideration were applied to the Republic of Moldova, because of the deeply-seated anti-Russian sentiments at societal level. It was possible, however, to legitimate closer relations with Hungary after 1996, when the accession goal became predominant. It is not out of the realm of imagination, therefore, that certain reinterpretations of the identity narrative and a reordering of priorities in the Hungarian case may result in such a course. But that can only be permissible if one identity priority is substituted by another. In other words, that permutations work within the already existing

framework and there exists a belief that the achievement of one goal is made possible by the renouncing of another. In this view, sedimented claims about identity remain a powerful motivator for action, albeit with altered reference points and priorities.

A final issue which should be addressed is whether Romania is unique in the strength and consistency of its identity narrative, and, if so, what this case study could bring to the field of research. It is true that the Romanian example is peculiar, from the continuity of the identity narrative and the presence of a single dominant narrative to the obvious alignment of all parties on issues of foreign policy. It is equally the case that other states have developed alternative narratives of identity or have parties the approach of which has a more obvious ideological component. In this sense, the utility of the present endeavour is that it shows the extent to which profoundly held beliefs emerging from sedimented identity narratives can become a dominant factor in influencing behaviour in very specific circumstances. It is obvious that the Romanian context is not one which may be applied to every state, as the nature and development of identity narratives is contingent on the unique experiences of that particular state. However, the methodology used here could offer an avenue into exploring the evolution and influence of identity narratives on other states' behaviour. Tracing the process of the development of the identity narrative and the extent to which portrayals have become either entrenched or have been altered by agents is the key to understanding where certain representations come from, how powerful they are, and in what direction or towards what goals they may influence behaviour. In this sense, the process may be applied to any state, whether or not the identity component to its behaviour is obvious, or whether there appear to be multiple narratives at play over time. What may be revealed is that the interaction between agents and structures is more complex than in the Romanian case, or that certain assumptions are challenged by alternative narratives, or, indeed, that the influence of these narrative structures on behaviour is not as powerful in some cases as it is in others. Overall, one would argue, the utility of this endeavour is as much in the outcome, a case study of a rarely researched actor, but also, potentially, in offering an alternative avenue for the study of identity and its relationship with state behaviour.

Directions for the Future

In conclusion to this project one should consider the future, both of the situation in Eastern Europe and that of Romanian identity. It is plausible, indeed probable, that, until the challenges the region faces are resolved, at least in terms of Romania's perceptions, identity-related concerns will continue to play an important role in the articulation of this state's foreign policy agenda. More importantly, if the situations discussed throughout this thesis escalate it is plausible that Romania's reactions will be shaped by identity considerations rather than solely dictated by the direction pursued by its allies. In any case, explaining or predicting Romania's behaviour in current circumstances hinges on an understanding of its identity-related anxieties and priorities. The part that Romania might play in either the resolution or the augmentation of these challenges remains to be seen.

As for the future of the Romanian identity narrative, it will be interesting to see whether these developments will lead to re-evaluations of its major tenets. Over the last ten years, since accession to the EU, the identity narrative has changed very little.⁶²² Certainly, Romanian elites' rhetoric has a fundamental Euro-Atlantic component, noticeable, as has been explored, in the state's efforts to justify its stance against Russia and to support the Republic of Moldova. Having said that, it is questionable whether integration has altered Romania's views of the Self or its Others significantly. That is because, one would argue, Romania views membership of the two organisation through the prism of its own national interest. Accession was a means to an end of ensuring security against the Russian threat and a more prosperous future. Membership is still an instrument in satisfying the security condition and it is now being extended in aid of Moldova. With Hungary, this association means that there are inherent limits to the amount and nature of interference Budapest can exert upon it.

In this light, whether a European version of the Romanian identity narrative will emerge is debatable. This is, certainly, the direction in which it is travelling as a natural

⁶²² This conclusion is drawn both by examination of historical sources – Constantiniu (2011), Djuvara (2010), etc. – but also assessments by authors such as Boia (2011, 2012) or Dragoman (2008) who have pointed out the endurance of perceptions of Romania as a national rather than European state.

consequence of increased contact and interdependence with Europe. Claims about Romanian identity, however, are particularly enduring and any alterations to the narrative to accommodate for this European component would have to be gradual and contingent on agents' desire to construct such a portrayal. There is a paradox in Romania's views of Europe: if on the one hand it is powerfully Europhile, there is no obvious desire to renounce its national values for European ones. Rather, if Europe may indeed alter the Romanian identity narrative it will do so by supplementing rather than replacing features. Romania's move out of the nation-state phase will be slow, particularly as this is the only role for the state ever conceived in its identity narrative. Therefore, whilst it is not inconceivable that the story of Romanian identity will evolve, as it is natural, the time frame would likely be a long one. In any case it is unlikely that this would occur during current challenges faced by the European project as a whole.

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