

The European Union: a Regional International Society from the Point of View of the Romanian Governmental Elites

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Abstract:** This article investigates how Romanian governmental elites conceptualize the European Union as an international society using the English School approach. The argument advanced in the article is that the EU is conceptualized as a society of states divided between a solidarist core and a fragmented periphery. New members must acquaint themselves first with a certain code of conduct and adhere to a certain system of values in order to achieve a movement into the core.

Keywords: European Union, Romanian governmental elites, international society, solidarist, pluralist

1. Introduction

The European Union (EU) is an experiment in flux aiming at creating solidarity or a union in which states agree to share a common standard of civilization reflected by common interests, values, rules and a framework of common institutions. To what extent do newly accepted members understand the Union's common interests, values and rules before they participate in the creation of common institutions? What meanings do they attach to the Union's common interests, rules and values? Existing studies involving testimonies of key decision makers in Romania and the EU reveal that some Romanian political elites perceived membership in the EU as a way of "acquiring greater legitimacy, new sources of wealth, and increased political influence."¹

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¹ *Economist Intelligence Unit*, 14 October 2010. Gabriel Partos, 'Object Lesson for the EU's Next Balkan Entrants', Tom Gallagher (2009) *Romania and the European Union: How the Weak Vanquished the Strong*. Manchester University Press, 2009.

As an area of research, the EU attracts the attention of many scholars. However, studies on the EU tend to focus more on the impact the EU enlargement has for the union (Nugent 2004); reasons why the union expands (Schimmelfennig and Sedelmeier 2005); the Europeanization of domestic politics (Featherstone and Radaelli et al., 2003), as well as the nature of EU integration (Leuffen, Rittberger and Schimmelfennig 2013). Regarding the EU conceptualization, scholars use a variety of theoretical approaches and methodologies including organization/system approach in a neofunctionalist and institutional integration framework (Keohane and Hoffmann 1991), as well as the grand theory (Nugent and Paterson 2006). For example, to understand the nature of the EU, Leuffen (et al., 2013) use a system approach and contrasts the EU with the state and the international organization perspective highlighting that “the EU fits neither type, and that it is like an international organization in some respects but more akin to a state in others” (Leuffen et al., 2013:1).

In contrast, scholars associated with the English School (ES) examine the EU from the society perspective using the international society framework (Stivachtis 2002, 2003; Stivachtis and Webber 2011; Diez, Manners and Whitman 2010). In the ES sense, there is a distinction between the EU as a regional organization, and the EU as a regional society. The distinction is dictated by the fact that in an international organization states pursue membership as long as they have an interest in the organization whereas, in an international society, states observe international law and society's norms, common values and interests. Since more emphasis in EU literature is on examining the evolution and expansion of the EU, this study aims to contribute to ES literature on regional international society with a study on how a society is constituted by meanings and actions of domestic actors. Using the international society perspective advanced by the ES, this paper will show how the EU is a society of states or an international society constituted by meanings diplomats and state leaders give to their views and actions in the EU. The paper uses the working definition of ES that describes governmental elites as officials who affect political outcomes.² Governmental elites selected for this paper include elites associated with the Democratic Liberal Party (LDP). The LDP coalition is perceived by Romanian and western comparative politics scholars as pro-western and focused on integrating Romania into the structures of European institutions (Tismaneanu & Gross 2005; Stan 2005; Mungiu-Pippidi 2005).³

The study examines textual data: written political statements, speeches and interviews provided by governmental elites (Presidency, Government, European Integration, and Ministry of Foreign Affairs) with respect to the EU and EU integration from the time they were invested into office, December 2004, to December 2010. The length of time, two years before EU accession and three years after, will show a variation in meanings and actions before Romania received EU membership and after EU accession. Criteria for data collection are based on the definition of international society 'word categories' reflecting content associated with meanings. Textual meaning will be extracted using the

² See Cornelia Navari, C. (2009) 'What the Classical English School was Trying to Explain, and Why its Members Were Not Interested in Causal Explanation', in Navari, C. (ed) *Theorizing International Society: English School Methods*, Palgrave Macmillan, pp. 39-58.

³ On LDP coalition see Lavinia Stan 2005, 2007, 2009 in *European Journal of Political Research*.

interpretivist method associated with international society. According to Richard Little (2000:409), the interpretivist method makes it “possible to draw on the language used in a given international society in order to identify and then understand the significance of the interests, values, rules and institutions that prevail in a particular place and at a particular point in time.” Therefore, by using the interpretivist method, the researcher is able to observe, discern, diagnose and explain the meanings of “EU,” “common interests,” “common values,” and “common culture” that governmental elites consider when they refer to the EU. The first step in textual analysis focuses on identifying the meanings behind the language of saying while the second step looks at the connection between the meanings of actions behind the language of doing.⁴

As noted, in the ES sense, the EU is an international society, yet exploring regional international societies continues to preoccupy ES scholars who hope to gain valuable insights on the society concept at the regional and global levels. The benefits associated with studying regional societies are reflected in learning more about the norms and interests that shape a society in solidarist versus pluralist terms. This paper shows how the EU is a solidarist society before states enter and how, after admission into society, the society concept changes into a society divided between the core and periphery. The paper introduces and first explains the concept of society advanced by ES scholars, and subsequently shows how the EU emerges as a society from the governmental elites attitudes and practices associated with the EU. The last section highlights elements that distinguish pluralist and solidarist conceptions of society in the case of the EU.

2. International Society and System/Society Distinction

What is, and how do scholars distinguish between a society and a system and why is it important to have a clear distinction. Hedley Bull (1977:13) underscored that “an international society exists when a group of states, conscious of certain common interests and common values, forms a society in the sense that they conceive themselves to be bound by a common set of rules in their relations with one another, and share in the workings of common institutions.” Thus, for an international society to exist, states and their representatives must know and accept the common rules of action of the international society. ES scholars indicate that a society can be a system but a system cannot be a society. A system, in contrast to an international society, is formed by states interactions based on rational calculations rather than conscious understanding of certain common interests and values.

Distinguishing between society and system raised important questions in the ES related to the nature of international society, the elements that constitute an international society vs. a system, the types of international society, etc. ES scholars argue that an international society is purposefully created and is a society in flux which comprises a fluid variety of interests, values, rules and institutions. For example, Bull (1977) found that throughout history there were various types of international societies united by a common culture, religion or language. In context of the EU, scholars claim that the EU’s society is a regional

⁴ This approach is discussed in detail by Jackson in Navari et al., 2009:36.

society of peace, socialization and transformation of an 'out group' of states into the rules, norms and practices of democracy (Stivachtis 2006; Diez, Manners and Whitman 2011). Furthermore, international societies, as Bull (1977) argued, can exist in the presence or absence of peace, they can be conflictual in nature, as well as form in the absence of a common culture. A society formed in the absence of common culture, Bull (1977) stressed, is a society in decline, resembling a system. Culture, as Stivachtis (1988) showed, plays an important role in the construction of an international society. However, culture alone does not distinguish between a system and society but determines the degree of integration of states into the international society. Because of society's fluidity into various models, more studies are necessary to capture their nature and history.

Bull (1977) identified the pluralist and solidarist conceptions of society by suggesting that agreement over distributive justice, morality and solidarity in developing and enforcing international law distinguishes between the two concepts. Which means that practical, not theoretical access to decision-making in the EU has the potential to distinguish between the pluralist and solidarist conceptions of society. Scholars concerned with societies contend that a solidarist society is a society of norm setting and sharing whereas, a pluralist society is of functional coexistence in which sharing occurs mainly in developing and enforcing international law (Wheeler 1992; Waever 1999; Dunne 1995; and Buzan 2002), stressing therefore, that in the solidarist context, states share a common identity, history, language, region, system of governance and political values. Buzan (1993) used the sociological distinction of *gemeinschaft* and *gesellschaft* to distinguish among solidarist and pluralist societies. He concluded that a *gemeinschaft* society is naturally constructed by states involving bonds of common sentiment, experience and identity while the *gesellschaft* society is rational, contractual and constructed in the absence of sentiment and tradition (Buzan 1993:333). Thus, the society's character is reflected in consensus over core values, the importance of norms, and the perception of how states tolerate each other's differences. How these will be manifested in political discourses and actions of Romanian governmental elites will be interesting to capture.

Buzan (2004) and Czaputowicz (2003) point to the degree of adherence and institutionalization of shared interests and values as "thick" and "thin" conceptions of society in which a "thick" solidarist society reflects adherence to common values and the pursuit of joint gains whereas a "thin" pluralist society restricts the practice of sharing to the extent of basic coexistence. A society is consciously created and cannot exist in the absence of rules and institutions. How do Romanian elites describe their journey in the creation of an EU society? Ayoob (1999:247) suggests that when assessing whether or not states establish a regional international society, it is necessary to investigate the understanding statesmen have regarding society's common interests and values because their understanding is essential in the creation of rules and institutions. Overall, the aspirations statesmen display with respect to roles and acknowledgments of interdependence will contour the notion of society. Diez & Whitman (2002); Stivachtis (2002); and Buzan (2009) portray the EU as a regional international society with system like features in which states advance their national interests and pursue economic and political survival. This brings into discussion the division between system/society and the nature of society at the regional level.

Stivachtis (2002) argues that the EU is more an illustration of “how an international society is always an international system” created by the logic of anarchy not culture. In his view, culture is not a mechanism that connects EU states together since historically EU states have experienced different levels of interactions, developments, economies and political systems. He believes culture is an indicator of distinction between members and prospective members in the international society. The distinctiveness of culture in the EU is well described by Slavenka Drakulic when highlighting that “however we might try to define Europe, the EU is not Europe. It is only Western Europe, and could better be named WEU if that name were not already in use by another similarly exclusivist organization” (Lord 2000:242).

On the other hand Buzan (2009) claims that the EU is a regional society in flux with thicker elements of society developed through cultural, political and economic interactions. In Buzan’s (2009) view, the EU society can be considered solidarist because the focus in the society is not only on coexistence and competition but cooperation in the pursuit of joint gains and the realization of shared values. Diez and Whitman (2002) argue however, that EU society is the core of European international society that originated in the seventeenth century, and membership in EU society should be distinguished from membership in the European international society. Therefore, states requiring EU membership identify with the EU’s common interests and values and accept the EU’s rules and institutions.

The absence of sharing a common culture and common values makes the EU a pluralist society based on contractual agreed rules of coexistence rooted in security interests. Meaning that aspiring members willingly accept the society’s existing rules of coexistence without their input. It is important to note that to capture the element of society at regional level is challenging because of the continuous interplay between system/society at the regional and global levels. States may exhibit pluralist tendencies when they engage in coexistence and competition for status at the global level and solidarist tendencies when they share norms, rules and institutions at the regional level. Scholars who focus on the EU’s society seem to suggest that the sharing of sovereignty, territoriality, diplomacy and great power management reflect the global level while the pool of sovereignty, engagement with Brusselian institutions, security and federalism reflect the regional level. Overall, in the context of society one must be aware of the “consciousness” aspect or of how members of the society feel about their society in contrast to others who are not part of it (on consciousness see Watson 1992). Furthermore, the ‘consciousness’ aspect of belonging to a society has the potential to distinguish between pluralism and solidarism as solidarity is about unity in observing common values and purposes while pluralism is about national interest separation and simple contractual coexistence between the core and periphery.

3. The EU - A Society of Statesmen

From the amount of political declarations reviewed, emerges first the idea that the EU is a society of statesmen created by western political elites. A shift in the discourse of

Romanian elites regarding the statesmen's union could be observed upon the rejection of the Constitutional Treaty by French and Dutch citizens.

The EU is a project meant to assure the best standards to its citizens. If we, the Romanians really want to join this project, it is necessary for us to become Europeans and to turn Romania into a European country.⁵

The EU is an experiment with imaginary frontiers symbolizing the guarantee of a political European contract. Europe is everywhere on the continent. A United Europe composed of several Europes of which we are all a part.⁶

The EU is an innovative project just as desired by Robert Schuman to create a strong entity, competitive, influent, a space of prosperity and security for all EU citizens.⁷

We began recently to understand that if the entry in the EU is first and foremost a problem of government and political class, EU integration is our problem, of each of 22 million Romanians since no government can produce changes in attitudes and mentalities of each person if we refuse to be integrated in the new reality.⁸

Probing through referendum the approval of EU citizens with respect to enlargement is a salutary solution that consolidates democracy. Ultimately, the EU is not a construction of political elites but of citizens. They must decide what type of Union they want.⁹

Shortly before the EU accession and thereafter, patterns that emerged in elites' interviews and political statements underscored the EU as a divided union between those who created it (the core), and those who joined it after the Cold War (the periphery). Is this a potential clue capturing the alternation between the two concepts of society or between the society and system?

Romania would not have accepted it as a way of tackling [the membership] negotiations being discriminated against by other members. The reality is that Europe is now more skeptical. Europe is now experiencing a crisis of self-confidence - a crisis caused by the fact that there is no clear view of future solutions. There are problems with EU constitution, with the future of EU expansion, with the functionality of European structures, which have become extremely bureaucratic.¹⁰

Romania is not interested in joining a family thorn by squabbling, but a powerful club where even though there are small countries and big countries, small histories and big histories, small cultures and big cultures, the result is only one, namely a credible, safe and completed EU.¹¹

⁵ The Office of Prime Minister, 13 April 2005.

⁶ Ungureanu, M.R. (2008) 'Microsoft Conference-Europes in Europe'. 14 April 2006. Chişinău State University. *Always Loyal: Diplomatic Notes for Modern Romania*. Polirom Press. Pp.130-147.

⁷ President Speech marking the occasion of Europe Day, 8 May 2009.

⁸ Discourse of Romanian President Traian Băsescu to Parliament on Romania's integration in the EU. Bucharest, 19 June 2006.

⁹ EurActiv, 27 December 2006. 'President Băsescu in European Media: We will make our voice heard'.

¹⁰ Radio Free Europe, 26 September 2006. 'Romania: President Traian Băsescu Speaks with RFR/RL'.

¹¹ BBC Monitoring European, 9 June 2005. 'Foreign Minister confident in Romania's EU entry in 2007'.

In the EU we are not asking for special treatment but ask for the same rules applied to the last ten countries that entered the EU...Romanians are not inferior to Europeans to be treated unequal.¹²

The Foreign Affairs Ministry, as early as 2009, made a database with the names and CVs of the most qualified candidates for the EEAS. We want the legitimacy of this service to be sustained by observing the provisions of the Treaty of Lisbon, thus by the completion of the one-third proportion with diplomats of the member states in the next iteration. We insist in all dialogues with European diplomats on the geographical balance principle, and we remained all this time in a continuous diplomatic contact with the High Representative.¹³

The fragments illustrate that from the outside, the EU is perceived as a Union in which differences are negotiated and not discriminated. Nevertheless, once granted membership in the Union, Romanians expected to have an equal voice in the decision making process. However, an equal voice seems to correlate with the internalization of EU norms and rules. Whereas, a significant idea emerging from the interview statements is that of Romanian political elites having a difficult time internalizing the European political process, and moving from the candidate mentality to that of member of the EU.¹⁴ This also indicates that countries located at the periphery of the union (for democratic, economic, political, cultural, societal, etc. concerns) must commit to understanding and internalizing the core society's values and norms in order to gain access to an equal voice in decision-making and obtain legitimization in providing peripheral security. From the outside, the EU resembles a union respecting the geographic equilibrium of multipolarity, created by conditions of anarchy and mitigated by elites' conscious commitment to peace, development and security. From the inside however, the EU is an entity in which states compete for political power and their own national interests. In the context of common culture, Romanian governmental elites are aware of the importance of sharing "common culture" and "common values" however, there is no consensus of what to share as "common" culture and values and how to practically translate this into the Romanian political experience; (for a detailed discussion on political values, see also Gallagher 2005;2009).

What type of society will we be inside the space of EU? The European standards shape Romanian future from the outside and the system of values Romanians chose to adopt shape Romanians future from the inside...the great challenge for Romania is to build a system of genuine values. Communism destructed our elites and undermined our values.¹⁵

Returning to meanings Romanian elites attach to the EU, statements reveal that they range from "a society negotiated by the elites," to an entity that legitimizes one state's "political credibility," to "guarantor of peace in Europe," "unifier force on the continent" to "highways, GPS system and carry-ons on two wheelers" "Santa Claus figure," "new culture and space," "union created by the citizens of 27 democracies," "European construction,

¹² euROpeanul, 19 December 2006. 'Interview with Traian Băsescu: How Romanians enter in a five star restaurant'.

¹³ Agerpress, 13 October 2010. 'Foreign Minister Baconschi: Romania insists on geographic balance principle concerning EEAS recruitment'.

¹⁴ Media interview with Lazăr Comănescu, 14 April 2008 at Club Ro-UE or Romania-EU Conference Club.

¹⁵ Government of Romania (2006) 'Address by PM Tăriceanu in the plenum of the reunited Chambers of the Parliament, with the theme': "The evolutions registered in the EU accession preparation. The continuation of the internal actions with a view of the effective accession on the 1st of January 2007."

a model of unity and diversity" etc. "To us Europe is a culture and a space that although they do not appear foreign, they seem to be very far away."¹⁶ Critics and ES scholars suggest that "the degree to which a system exhibits elements of society must ultimately be measured by elites' perceptions of this society's rules and norms" (Finnemore 2001; Copeland 2003). Therefore, the meanings that Romanian political elites attach to the EU reveal the EU as a society of states created by European elites from common desires to strengthen the European identity, preserve peace, and enhance prosperity for all.

The EU is a project made for population not for politicians. It is most likely that politicians would live just as well in a united Europe as in an individualized Europe, in a United States of Europe or in Europe as it is today.¹⁷

As indicated by political statements, the entry of Romania in the EU has been first made by the entry of the political class and subsequently by Romanian institutions and society. This explains why some Romanian elites expressed urgency in teaching the Romanian nation about the European project.

One of the most important things for states pursuing EU membership is not the time of entry into the union but preparing the new European citizens for living in an enlarged Europe. To us Europe is a culture and a space that although they do not appear foreign to us, they seemed to be very far away. We even developed a complex against this institutional structure - the European Union – who expects us to come yet, it is up to us to get there and open the door.¹⁸

At the Union level challenges remain however, in changing attitudes and mentalities in the domain of EU integration. In the view of political elites, the EU is a product of diplomatic effort that began at the elite level and somehow got lost at the population level. Romanian elites underscore that they participate in the EU discourse and are aware of the need to adopt the same values and responses similar to the EU. However, there is a discrepancy between knowing and acting on what is known. Political elites place responsibility for the discrepancy on the understanding of how domestic politics should unfold, the bureaucratization of state institutions, and the lack of modernization and reform.

Transformation or fundamental transformations in mentality, agriculture and farming including food safety rights; some simple rules which for occidentals are as given, we need to learn to internalize them...the slaughter of the pig ritual for example; [we] must understand that we enter in an organization, a home with specific rules. We must respect them. Why? Because respecting the rules of the game leads to benefits. It helps you to live well but the rules of the game must be respected whether we like it or not.¹⁹

We can speed up reforms in order to become full members of the EU.²⁰

¹⁶ Discourse of Romanian President, 19 June 2006.

¹⁷ *Mediafax*, 15 September 2011. 'Băsescu: I am not embarrassed to repeat the thesis of the creation of the United States of Europe'.

¹⁸ Discourse of Romanian President, 19 June 2006.

¹⁹ *EurActiv*, 23 October 2006. 'Interview with Leonard Orban: What villagers don't know about the EU'.

²⁰ *Europe Gateway*, 6 July 2006. 'Romanian Minister of European Integration Ms. Anca Boagiu in an interview for Portal Europe'.

It is not what we say but what we do that counts...I know about the perception in Brussels (...) we know what we have to do. Romania has to change how it is perceived by the EU - promising much and delivering little. There is a gap between saying 'yes' and doing the implementation. Twice a month we monitor everything we said, everything we committed ourselves to doing, and send the reports to Brussels (...) reforming the judiciary won't happen tomorrow (...) solving the issues of corruption and the judiciary means dealing with organized crime, and its impact on criminality. These are so entrenched. Such behavior will change if the penalties are serious and do not discriminate.²¹

Nobody should expect "miracles" in the short term, given there are problems that had not been settled before. We cannot make Romania in the wake of accession to the EU, the mirror image of Switzerland or Germany. For us, it is important to implement the reforms started.²²

Romanians also stress the importance of states unity inside the EU, guidance, fairness and believing in the same values inside the union. For them, the EU means modernisation, transformation of mentalities and institutions. However, when the EU faces crises of "self-confidence" or confronts problems associated with national interests, constitution, future of expansion and functionality of structures, the EU is conceptualized by the elites as a system or a society in decline, alternating between solidarist and pluralist behavior. Furthermore, Romanian elites view the EU as a society with a western European core in which they have to work hard to gain an equal voice in decision making in the creation of common institutions.

First, the status of EU member state implies a permanent effort to observe the European norms and standards, and participate in the process of the European construction. Romania will become an EU member on January 1st 2007, in the same conditions as the states that joined the EU in 2004, and without safeguard clauses.²³

In the last 15 years, Romanians were criticized and placed under pressure by the international community. Sometimes they wondered if, and whether or not they were led by Bucharest or from elsewhere. Remember all the vehement criticism coming from various politicians more or less engaged in criticizing Romania. It was a long and difficult period in which every European politician who wanted to show control of the situation chose to discredit Romanians.²⁴

We need a new framework, more efficient and courageous to consolidate European competition in the next decade...It is also important to remember that the principle of solidarity is the main pillar of the European construction. We cannot become competitive at the union level with imbalances between north and south or east and west. Without inner cohesion the Union cannot be competitive...the gaps between old and new EU members should be reduced.²⁵

²¹ *International Herald Tribune*, 22 March 2005. 'Dinga: Romania vows to link words to deeds RECKONING FOR THE EU/A compromise and criticism'.

²² *BBC Monitoring European*, 24 November 2005. 'EU foreign affairs committee criticizes Romanian corruption'.

²³ Government of Romania, 26 September 2006. 'Romania will become EU member on January 1st 2007, in the same conditions as the states that joined the EU in 2004, and without safeguard clauses'.

²⁴ *Radio Delta RFI*, 18 November 2005. 'Interview with Traian Băsescu' available on the presidency.ro website.

²⁵ President Speech Marking Europe's Day. Cotroceni Palace, 7 May 2010.

The EU is a solidarist society in the view of Romanian elites when differences are negotiated between core and periphery, and especially before Romania gained membership in the EU. After accession, the Romanians view of the EU is that of a society in which states are faced with choices to either join in the development of the model of stronger voices (the core) or lag behind in integration, corruption and traps of domestic politics in the periphery.

EU means modernizing Romania at the current standards of any European country. This would mean a Romania in which all citizens feel equal before the law, the removal of all privileges and discriminations [...] a medium that enables the citizen to be treated equally, respectfully by all public authorities, and the authorities to spend public money to serve national interest.²⁶

National interests however, continue to influence the process of intensive interaction inside society (i.e., Romania in the case of Kosovo and Serbia; UK in the case of Euro and freedom of movement, etc.). An equal voice inside the EU seems influenced by the size of a state's economy, past histories and stereotypes as countries on the outer layer of the society need to work harder to win the trust of the society's core. Membership in Schengen is a case in point for Romania, as the country needs to win the trust of the Netherlands and other core members to receive permission to join the program despite the fact that Romania made its entry in the EU on common security and its ability to protect the eastern frontier of the EU.

4. The EU: Society between Common Culture, Interests and Values

Culture, as underscored by Romanian elites, "provides a base for dialog, mutual understanding and development" and determines, as scholars such as Stivachtis (1998) suggested, the level of states integration in the society, meaning the acceptance of the society's rules and practices.²⁷ During the accession period, Romanians tried to make their case for entry in the EU based on a common culture and history. However, linking the eastern culture with that of other parts of Europe cannot but underscore a canvas of cultural diversity.²⁸ The understanding that Romanian elites seem to have in the context of a common culture is that of their first encounter of using culture as a means to communicate with Europeans. The meanings attached to common culture reflect the development of a solidary attitude toward preserving the common heritage.

We have the opportunity to show Europe the real values that Romania represents. Now when we become citizens of Europe, we are bound to prove to Europe what we are, what we can do, and what we appreciate and love. Culture is above all other things dialog. I am glad that Romania has started to identify with culture, a thing which we could hardly imagine ten years ago.²⁹

²⁶ Government of Romania, 25 January 2010. 'Statements by PM Emil Boc at the military ceremony organized in Bucharest, on the occasion of the Romanian Union Day'.

²⁷ Romanian President, Sibiu, January 31, 2007.

²⁸ 'What Do you Think About Romanians'. (An interesting survey of the EU's youth conducted after more than five years of membership). http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=k_AHKUsrDxk [Last Accessed on January 19, 2014].

²⁹ Government of Romania, 1 January 2007. 'Address by PM Călin Popescu-Tăriceanu at the inauguration of Sibiu-European Capital of Culture'.

Cultural heritage is not only a treasury of identity but a factor of sustainable development; European Council is involved in proposing and directing common interest policies to preserve the diversity and the common cultural treasure we inherited.³⁰

Unfortunately, we too often tend to think of the respect for law and rules in terms of coercion, and the defense mechanism which automatically starts is that of disobeying law. We need to transform the respect for law into a fundamental value that regulates relations among citizens. Then, there will be order here as in any other European country, and the energy which we waste might be invested in a much more profitable way.³¹

The idea of common culture is reflected in history, identity and symbols, the development of a solidary attitude toward preserving the common European heritage, art and architecture. In the EU, Romania has had to overcome perceptions related to the issues of inclusion of the Rroma population. Although the integration of the Rroma population should have been a problem of the union's common interest, most of the time it has been treated only as a Romanian problem.

We are a country that has its own values, we are a country as culturally rich as any European country [...] Yes, we have a Rroma population, but at the same time you can find the Rroma people all over Europe, not only Romania has Rroma. We could say that the Rroma are the most European citizens of Europe. You can find them everywhere in all countries.³²

Romanian elites are aware that the EU society presupposed adherence to a certain code of conduct and to a certain system of values. However, both cultural and political cohesion between east and west needed to be learned, internalized and cultivated.³³ Regarding common interests, an international society is described by states common interests and values, rules and institutions and a solidarist society by sharing and conscious recognition of common interests and values in the creation of common rules and institutions. The setup of EU institutions, theoretically, allows for an equal input in the decision-making process by all members. Practically, however, inside the union there is competition among western states and states from new Europe to set up an agenda and work in the construction of common institutions. Security, at the periphery of the Union, is a common denominator underpinning Romanian common interests with the EU. Whether in the Black Sea region, market economy or Eastern European border, Romanians believe that security is a domain in which the EU's and Romania's common interests converge. Despite this, Romanian elites believe that a candidate of the periphery needs to show evidence of performance to overcome the "candidate status" mentality and to fully participate in negotiating and harmonizing Romania's interests with those of the EU.

Some scholars argue that states memories of previous systems may prevent them from being fully integrated into a society as they will spend most of their time in the outer circle of society and may never leave this place (Neumann 2010:9). Pointing toward the

³⁰ President Speech, 7 June 2007.

³¹ Government of Romania, 17 May 2006. 'Address by PM Tăriceanu in the plenum of reunited Chambers of The Parliament'.

³² Euractiv, 24 October 2005. 'Interview with Romanian Minister of Integration, Anca Boagiu'.

³³ See Pușcaș 2007 for an interesting discussion.

distinction between core and periphery, some elites credit the inability of movement, to the lack of a genuine political class familiar with the European political process.³⁴ Interesting however, from the society perspective, is the fact that Romanians do not fault the core of the EU for preferential treatment in the decision-making process but point toward their individual weaknesses of knowing the modicum of the European political process, becoming timely acquainted with the European political issues in order to take advantage of assessing, strategizing and consolidating Romania's interests and policies in concordance with EU policies of coexistence, minorities and financial budgeting in a timely manner.³⁵ Whether it was dealing with the Rroma population with an EU common approach or respecting the free movement of people, division between the core and the periphery in European society continued.

If we really want to correctly implement the provisions of the Lisbon Treaty, if we want to have a fruitful perspective of the *EU as a global player*, I think it's a pity to put at risk any of our achievements – that's why we need transparent rules, real equity between member states and political debate on a democratic basis if we really want to build up the EU in the 21st century in a completely transformed global environment.³⁶

From the solidarist/pluralist perspective, it is important to note that Romanian elites appear preoccupied, since becoming part of the union, with preserving the union's founding principles and this indicates Romania's commitment to the strength of the union. Therefore, their effort is visible in preventing insatiable competition inside the Union which, in their view, has potential to weaken the union's construction. Scholars in the ES discuss changes in the society to the thick and thin exchanges of norms and values and the setup of rules and institutions. The society concept describes what consciously unites and divides a group of states. The idea of society as illustrated by Bull & Watson (1984:120) is dictated by the will and consent of the member to adopt the values and practices of international society. There is evidence suggesting that Romanian political elites are willing to adopt the EU's values and practices however, with a peripheral twist in their implementation. This may be because of their lack of understanding and existing differences in the bureaucratic system. Although Romania tried to recreate and adapt state institutions to the EU's standards, in some areas problems continue to persist. A similar understanding of common interests emerges from the discourse of Romanian elites. However, when it comes to common EU values of human dignity, citizenship, justice and equality different practices reflect the level of political accountability, clean government and active citizenship.

Membership is not synonymous with the actual integration. Our integration must come from the capacity to generate economic growth, from efficient institutions, a credible justice, independent and able to bring justice to people, uncorrupted officials, development of infrastructure at European standards, and a clean environment.³⁷

³⁴ *The Financial Times*, 16 January 2011. 'Interview Transcript: Teodor Baconschi. Interview by Chris Bryant in Vienna.

³⁵ Interview with Lazar Comănescu. *Romania-EU Conference Club*, April 14, 2008.

³⁶ Interview with Minister Baconschi. *The Financial Times*, 16 January 2011; emphasis added.

³⁷ President Speech, 31 January 2007.

We have been submitted to an extremely strict and rigorous monitoring from the European partners. There has been much stricter monitoring than in any one of the 10 countries that joined the EU on the 1st of May 2004.³⁸

Romanian political elites continue to be in search of values, fighting against corruption and seeking independence of the judiciary. Some elites argue that "Romania is not different than any other EU member. It respects the same values as other EU states and condemns the same faults as other EU states."³⁹ Others point to the quality of the political class, peripheral cultural practices and obscure international interferences as the main causes influencing the less uniform translation of values between Romania and the EU. Even in foreign policy some scholars assess Romanian performance as crafted more in terms of political interests rather than values. "We act as if we were not one and even the EU does not accept us. We are still foreign [...] We rather seem like a country with 19th century aspirations, concerned with our own identity and our own borders, forgetting that the EU enlargement has made borders superfluous."⁴⁰ Some elites suggest that the time has come for the Romanian political leaders to propose the values and the younger generation to foster and implement them. Others however, suggest that "the greatest challenge for Romania is to build a system of genuine values because communism destructed our elites and undermined our values. The European project provides us a support of values. But if we do not undertake the fundamental values which lay at the basis of the United Europe, we have no chance to evolve within the system."⁴¹ The EU's expectations of Romania seem to influence the practices of the Romanian statesmen.

At least three foreign ministers had to resign on matters related to protecting Romanian citizens abroad and/or describing people's style of protest at home respectively. Furthermore, western or core members of the EU continue to compete inside the EU for more political power and their states national interests. An illustration of the practice is the competition for the European External Action Services (EEAS).⁴² The principle of solidarity, in some views, is tested in the EU during moments when member states come together to provide a common and efficient solution to a problem. If the failure to find a common policy to integrate Rroma is concerned, the conscious recognition of common interests seems to converge with those of the EU when security is conceptualised in the name of the state rather than the individual. Inside the EU, Romanian elites claim to affect decision-making to the extent that they point to issues and express concerns over the EU's cohesion, vision and governance.

Solidarity is the common denominator of the EU that needs to guide us forward. Economic and financial crises test the capacity of EU member states to be solidary to integrate in their own political conduct principles of the union founding fathers. Allow me to remind you of the words of Jean Monnet suggesting that nothing is possible without the involvement of people; nothing has a durable future in the absence of institutions.⁴³

³⁸ Government of Romania, 16 May 2006.

³⁹ Bucharest Daily News, December 21, 2005.

⁴⁰ BBC Monitoring European, 28 April 2009. 'Commentary by Alina Mungiu-Pippidi: Big Confusion on Romania's Foreign Policy in Moldova'.

⁴¹ Government of Romania, 17 May 2006. 'Address by PM Tăriceanu in the plenum of the reunited Chambers of the Parliament'.

⁴² Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 30 August 2010.

⁴³ President Speech, 7 May 2010.

5. How Romanian Governmental Elites View EU's Norms and Rules

As an equal participant in society's decision-making, a state must show a common understanding of the interests and values, rules and norms of the society in order to provide valuable input in the creation of common institutions. In the view of Romanian elites, the norm of EU integration is associated with a positive evolution or the equivalent of state reform and modernisation. Elites are aware of what the norm of integration entails. "Efficient institutions, a credible independent justice, uncorrupted officials, European standards infrastructure, clean environment and similar standards of living between Romanians and Europeans."⁴⁴ Since 2007, Romania continues to work on the institutionalisation of the norm of integration; however, Romanian elites acknowledge that there is a disconnection between the EU's actions and Romania the recipient.⁴⁵ Notably, the EU holds the norm of integration to the same esteem as cooperation and negotiation. Some scholars suggest that integration and freedom of circulation count as distinct regional norms consciously developed by the EU to strengthen the elements of community at the regional level (Diez & Whitman 2002).

How do Romanian elites approach the norm of integration? First, the norm of integration has been considered a main priority in domestic and foreign policy since it reflects the engagement between Romania and the EU in 51 Chapters of negotiation. The European Commission filed periodic reports outlining progress in the chapters of justice and internal political affairs, two domains in which Romania continues to lag behind. Second, Romanians acknowledge that the observership period from April 2005 to January 2007 was too short for Romanian elites to familiarize themselves with EU institutions, rules and norms. They attribute the lack of progress in integration to the immaturity of the political class and poor preparation of public servants in the field of cooperation between Romania and the EU.⁴⁶ Gallagher (2009) assesses it however, as a trap in "historical legacy of corruption and underperforming institutions." Some elites point to the fact that there is a difference in mentality between East and West.⁴⁷

Interestingly, Romanians acknowledge, in a positive sense, the importance of the instruments of integration such as the "road map" provided by the EU and the 'red' and 'green' flags designed to correct Romania's behavior inside the Union. "The fact that only four of the 14 red flags which existed on different fields in the October 2005 Report remain is proof of the progress that has been achieved."⁴⁸ With respect to 'warning letters' it remains unclear whether Romanian officials perceive them as efficient "working instruments" confirming the European Commission support for Romania's efforts toward integration or as an unfair burden that elites must deal with.⁴⁹ Some call them "an inventory of issues [...] a 'memento' or an 'aid memoir'."⁵⁰ The detachment with how some of the

⁴⁴ President's Speech, 31 January 2007.

⁴⁵ EurActiv, 24 October 2005. 'Interview with Romania's minister for European integration: Anca Boagiu'.

⁴⁶ Free Romania, 18 November 2005. 'Anca Boagiu: Romanian political class is not sufficiently prepared and sufficiently mature'.

⁴⁷ Old Dilemma, 29 September 2005, No.89. 'A letter that is not lost but open'.

⁴⁸ Government of Romania, 16 May 2006. 'Statement by PM Tariceanu on the European Commission Report'.

⁴⁹ BBC Monitoring European, 8 November 2005. 'Romanian authorities see EU warning letters as 'working instrument'.

⁵⁰ BBC Monitoring European, 24 November 2005. 'EU foreign affairs committee criticizes Romanian corruption'.

warning letters related to justice affairs have been approached, provide important clues regarding norms and when they matter in an international society.

The norm of integration matters for the modernisation of the Romanian state which will subsequently enhance solidarity within the general interest of the Union, and enable Romania to have an equal voice inside the Union. An indication exists, highlighting Romania's previous requests to France and the UK, on providing advisors capable of dealing with the fight against corruption and EU integration.⁵¹ Furthermore, the norm of integration seemed to matter the most for Romania during the period of accession, de-politicisation of justice, and the adoption/creation of new institutions such as the National Agency of Integrity (ANI) and the National Anti-Corruption Agency (DNA). Initiatives promoted through leaflets and brochures, "I do not bribe and I don't take bribes," in public officials offices and at the frontiers demonstrate the beginning of dialogue on the matter. However, only after the Schengen Program refusal and the big scandals at the frontiers in 2012 did visible results in eradicating corruption began to appear. This indicates a tendency for Romanian elites to be compliant and take the norm of EU integration seriously only when they are coerced. Signals coming from the US Embassy, Brussels and Washington reflect the pressure of global international society to help put Romania on the right track in this sense.⁵² Notably, political will remains a necessary factor in the acquisition, internalization and institutionalization of the norm of integration.

6. The EU: A Pluralist or Solidarist Society?

As a reminder, the solidarist society is a society of consensus and coexistence based on commonly created and shared norms, rules and institutions whereas, a pluralist society is a society in which the influence of norms, laws and institutions are secondary (Buzan 2004:61). The EU, as conveyed by Romanian elites, is a society in flux divided between core and periphery or a society of layers encompassing a layer of states who tend to lead and a layer of states who are inclined to follow. The idea of "union" is subordinated to the elites. It is a project by the elites to support their state and population interests symbolizing a political and moral contract among them to improve the life of their people. Life inside the EU is divided between solidarity and competition, values and common interests. Romanians are aware that they need to transform the respect for the rule of law into a fundamental value if they want to succeed in finding a voice for Romania inside the union. The EU is conceptualised as a solidarist society when it shares, mentors and leads in issues of common interests, and as a pluralist society when national interests, less transparent methods, and crisis of self-confidence predominate. The solidarist case is strengthened by the EU's model based on integration; however, the case of Rroma is either an anomaly or a suggestion that "common interest of Rroma" integration divides rather than unites EU's members because they cannot agree on a common solution to protect the freedom of movement of this population.

This paper highlights that, in the case of the EU, the core sets up norms and

⁵¹ *Le Monde*, 4 March 2005. 'Romanian Presidency asks UK and France for help to fight against corruption'.

⁵² *Gândul*, 25 January 2012. 'US Ambassador: we occidentals must not want to fight corruption more than you do'.

directions, and negotiates or determines the periphery's behavior. In this case, the core of an international society matters because it generates norms and rules to sustain the society. For example, Wight (1977) argued that European international society originated in Christendom with a geographical core and a periphery of powers that changed throughout the evolutionary period. In his view, until the 1500s, Italy constituted the core and between 1500 and 1763 the core was formed by Western Europe. More research is required in this area to establish, with certainty, the core and the periphery in the EU when it comes to movement of people and common security interests. With respect to society's common values, it appears that Romania imports western values and struggles to preserve some of its regional corrupt values. The EU is united by the idea of prosperity and equality and divided by the different meanings and understandings between each other, national interests and power.

Overall, in the view of Romanians, the EU is a union of whatever member states want it to be. It can consolidate into a union of democracies to jointly preserve negotiated interests and values or it can descend into a hierarchical union of leaders and followers. The EU is a vibrant international society that needs to be sustained by states and their populations. It is a thin solidarist society, when Romanians share in the EU's individual values and minority rights and a thick international society when they commonly agree and show evidence to comply with the norm of integration to coexist in the EU. At the same time however, it resembles a pluralist society when the norm of integration is used as a norm of calculation to only improve strategic relations with the EU but not consciously come to the realisation that combating corruption and improving the efficiency of institutions benefit, first Romanians, and thereafter the global international society. On a final note, in an international society, the involvement of states population matters as much as the involvement of governmental elites. Regional society (read the EU) is a type of international order resulting from governmental elites practices and their conscious commitment to peace. To be sustainable, in addition to economic solidarity, a Union requires social and political understanding, as well as harmonization of mentalities, practices and rules. Future research focusing on other governmental elites, from Romania or other countries, on how they understand the concept of union from the inside out will help the EU identify the most suitable approach for Ukrainian accession and it will also reveal the extent to which members of the union share a meaningful understanding of the union's common values, culture, interests, rules and institutions.

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