Master Thesis

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Coaching and Lobbying Europeanization

Romanian diplomacy as a norm entrepreneur in Moldova's EU accession process

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Abstract

The recent developments in the context of the full-scale Russian invasion of Ukraine show that democratization is still alive and under a reformation process (Anghel and Džankić 2023). In this regard, the Europeanization process, understood as a subtype of democratic diffusion, deserves close scrutiny. Thus, the primary research goal of this thesis is to investigate the extent to which diplomacy and diplomatic training serve as norm diffusion instruments in Member States – prospective candidates' relationship. To this end, this paper argues that diplomacy and diplomatic training are two of the key multi-level norm diffusion methods. This claim is supported by looking at how Romania and its Ministry of Foreign Affairs act in support of Moldova's EU accession process. In this thesis, Romania is conceptualized of as a complementary agent of Europeanization, which employs a bi-dimensional strategy of norm entrepreneurship: coaching and lobbying. First, as a coach, Romania helps Moldovan counterparts with expertise-based knowledge transfer through diplomatic courses and other training opportunities. Second, by taking leading roles in European summits and publicly supporting Moldova's EU accession process, Romania turned itself into a Europeanization lobbyist capable of uploading its preferences in Brussels and becoming a well-known reservoir of Moldova expertise among Member States. Based on these results, this research contributes to the literature by providing a complementary assessment of Europeanization by focusing on receivers and their attitudes toward norm providers rather than the contrary.

Acknowledgements

For Mihaela, Bianca, and Simona, the heart and motivation behind this research

Introduction

The general assumption is that democracy is facing a major structural slump (Diamond 2020). Many scholars argue that authoritarian regimes are gaining terrain, resulting in severe democratic backsliding around the world (Diamond 2015; Kneuer 2021; Repucci and Slipowitz 2022; Ridge 2022). However, it is important to emphasize that the future of democracy must be unquestionable, and mistakes in the democratization process must be regarded as irregularities. (Cianetti and Hanley 2021; Welzel, Kruse, and Brunkert 2022). The recent developments in the context of the full-scale Russian invasion of Ukraine show that democratization and its subdivisions are still alive and under a reformation process (Anghel and Džankić 2023). The European Union and its Member States have embarked on a tremendous venture of attracting support for Ukraine, which determined even so ca-called hybrid regimes like Azerbaijan or Kyrgyzstan to align closer to the EU and to reduce their interactions with the Russian Federation.

This one-of-a-kind and unexpected event highlights the significance of a comprehensive conversation on democratic backsliding, rather than focusing only on issues that could boost the democratization process. Attention should be paid more to major democratic agents and their effectiveness inside and outside the democratic community. In this regard, the Europeanization process, understood as a subtype of democratic diffusion, deserves close scrutiny. To a point, Europeanization served as an effective strategy, particularly in its later phase, when the European Union was able to stimulate the adoption of democratic norms among former Communist nations in Central and Eastern Europe. (Schimmelfennig and Sedelmeier 2004; 2005; Schimmelfennig 2015; 2018). Despite the fact that the European Union has been in existence for decades, the Europeanization process was only recently thoroughly analyzed, due to the fact that Western

countries that were already Europeanized were able to support the internal reform of newcomers by using "stick and carrots". (Bátora 2003; 2012; Agnantopoulos 2010; Anghelescu 2011). However, the EU's methods and tools are far from flawless, resulting in a trend of "de-Europeanization" in areas such as foreign policy (Dyduch and Müller 2021; Monteleone 2021; Raik and Rikmann 2021).

This thesis seeks to shed light on overlooked aspects of the Europeanization process in order to increase our understanding of how Europeanization works and what can be done to improve its efficacy. As a result, the primary research goal is to investigate the extent to which diplomacy and diplomatic training serve as norm diffusion instruments. Even though diplomacy and diplomatic training are ubiquitous in the empirical world of politics, they are less theorized in democratization and Europeanization literatures. Diplomacy and diplomatic training as Europeanization tools will be examined within the context of a larger empirical case study focusing on Romania's norm diffusion approach to Moldova's accession to the EU. The thesis investigates how new Member States, such as Romania, use foreign policy tools to aid the Europeanization of EU prospective members, such as the Republic of Moldova.

As a result, this paper argues that diplomacy and diplomatic training are two of the key multi-level norm diffusion methods employed by Romania and its Ministry of Foreign Affairs in support of Moldova's EU accession process. In this model, Romania is conceived of as a complementary agent of Europeanization, which employs a bi-dimensional strategy of norm entrepreneurship. First, Romania is complementing the EU-led Europeanization endeavors through a coaching dimension. As a coach, Romania is able to 1) provide expertise-based knowledge transfer to Moldova through diplomatic training and 2) offer guidance and follow-up support to Moldova as a trusted advisor. Second, the lobbying dimension of Romania

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refers to its capacity to upload its national foreign affairs preferences at the EU level and to be recognized inside the European community as a frontline player in Moldova's efforts to join the European Union.

This dissertation makes two distinct contributions to our understanding of Europeanization. First, from a theoretical standpoint, this thesis conceptualizes diplomacy and diplomatic training as instruments of norm diffusion in the context of Europeanization. The understanding of diplomacy as a mechanism of Europeanization highlights EU and non-EU states' interconnectedness and may impact the downloading and uploading stages discussed by previous literature. Furthermore, the conceptualization of diplomatic training as a mechanism of Europeanization is shifting away from dichotomies proposed by previous literature such as the "conditionality vs reward" model and offers a perspective in which norm diffusion takes place by mentoring and guidance. Furthermore, this study breaks with the tradition in the literature to focus on Europeanization norm providers and presents a complementary examination of this process by focusing on norm receivers and their attitudes towards norm providers.

To complete this research endeavor, the thesis is structured as follows. The first chapter includes a thorough literature review by pointing out the relevance of Europeanization in a broader discussion on democratization, pleading for the introduction of diplomacy as a norm diffusion mechanism. The second section deals with the shortcomings of Börzel & Risse's theoretical framework on Europeanization and norm diffusion, as well as with the methodological approach used for this research. The third section provides empirical evidence on the influence of Romanian diplomacy and diplomatic training on Moldova's EU accession process by emphasizing the complexity of norm diffusion channels, as well as Moldova's quest for international support. The

last section concludes the research by highlighting the relevance of Romania as a complementary

agent of Europeanization to the EU's toolbox and Moldova as a dynamic recipient of it.

1   Literature review - unboxing democratization. The gift of diplomacy

This chapter closely follows the debates on the process of democratization and its European implications. It emphasizes the evolution of democracy debates, beginning with initial approaches and progressing through time, highlighting the emergence of transition theories and hybrid regimes. Following that, Europeanization is evaluated as a subtype of democratization that alters internal practices and regulations with an emphasis on national foreign policy and diplomacy. The chapter concludes with a detailed examination of Romania's and Moldova's interactions with the EU, as well as its norm diffusion processes.

1.1   The recurrent faces of democratization

1.1.1   Back to classics. Initial theories

Democratization is mostly related to the struggle of achieving democracy in a certain political arrangement. In this regard, the concept of democratization is strongly connected to the Cold War era, when Western countries were engaged in a fierce ideological battle with the Soviet-led communist side. Back then, the general assumption among scholars was that the initial status quo of all political constructions is essentially authoritarian. Thus, liberal democracy has emerged as an outlier constantly threatened by the return of tyranny (Shapiro 2008). Several academics have tried to identify and understand the premises of authoritarianism, as well as the domestic factors that bear the potential to convert such regimes into fully fledge democracies (Rustow 1970; Stepan 1991; Huntington 1993; Dahl 1998). National unity doubled by a prolonged and inconclusive dispute for power is meant to set the stage for the "decision phase" (Rustow 1970, 354-358). In

this framework of expectations, opposition leaders backed by forces rooted in society are pushing for free elections. In case of success, newly established democracies have to remain in competition with authoritarian forces for an undetermined period (Rustow 1970, 360).

Historically speaking, democratization movements had complex paths. They could be classified into two major categories. The first classification implies a major warfare or disruptive international event that would lead to structural changes (Stepan 1991). In this setup, warfare, especially the post-war phase, has the potential to stimulate either a pro-democratic external intervention or an internal anti-authoritarian group to steer the state on a democratic path (Stepan 1991). The second category is related to the internal dissatisfaction of elites or society that could take the form of a violent revolution or a peaceful political agreement for democratic change (Stepan 1991). When referring to domestic elites it should be noted that even authoritarian nomenclature could be a factor of change, dissident groups from the political and military establishment are usually prone to cultivate pro-democratic reforms to propel their own ambitions and gain additional power.

Another method to assess the emergence of democratization processes is by grouping them into the so-called "waves". Scholars such as Huntington and McFaul have observed that a number of states go simultaneously through the process of democratization. Moreover, they noted a geographic distribution, with waves occurring in well-delimited regions such as Eastern Europe in the late '80s. To some extent, there is a consensus on placing the French and American Revolutions as the kick-off events of the first wave of democratization (Huntington 1993). While some scholars have pleaded for three major waves of democratization in a generous timeframe of almost two centuries (the 1700s – 1900s) (Huntington 1993), others have preferred to highlight the recurrent nature of waves in a precise amount of time, increasing dramatically the number of waves from 4

(McFaul 2023) to at least 13 (Gunitsky 2018). However, while Huntington's perspective is diluted by extensive time-lapse, the latter approach seems to be more coherent, arguing for multiple contagion-based vertical and horizontal waves of democratic diffusion (Gunitsky 2018).

1.1.2 Hybrid regimes or failed transitions?

The path towards a fully fledge democracy is not always a smooth process. It was observed that once on the democratic track, some countries tend to remain stuck somewhere in between. Several factors contribute to an incomplete transition to democracy. On a structural level, the absence of a coherent alternative, the lack of an assertive foreign power to influence the internal processes, or conflicts within the ruling elites are just a few factors that may affect the quest for democracy (Przeworski 1991). In contrast, at the level of agents, uncertainty and the absence of a compromise among elites are key elements that could hamper the development of liberal institutions (Przeworski 1991). However, there is no certain recipe for a successful transition, the ingredients could be the same for all, but with different outcomes. After World War II, the USA and Western Europe tried to assist democratization in Latin America and Southern Europe, both using similar instruments. But, as Whitehead has shown, the Franco-German commitment to a positive democratic transition of Greece, Portugal, and Spain was stronger than the Washington-led elusive assistance awarded to Latin American states (Whitehead 1991).

Therefore, hybrid regimes emerged as a distinct category of political regimes inside the general debate on stuck transitions. Even though it is probable that hybrid regimes existed before the end of the Cold War, the contemporary definition of the term has a deeper meaning than earlier ones. In short, hybrid regimes are combining elements from democratic and authoritarian regimes, but are lacking a proper arena of free political contestation (Carothers 2002; Diamond 2002; Merkel 2006; Bogaards 2009; Cassani 2014; Levitsky and Way 2020). Depending on what

ingredients are missing from this mix, hybrid regimes could take the form of illiberal democracies (Zakaria 1997), semi-democracies (Case 1993), semi-authoritarianism (Ottaway 2013), or electoral authoritarianism (Schedler 2013; 2015). However, the abundance of conceptual developments has generated a wave of critics. Ironically, or not, Collier and Levitsky named the rush for unnecessary theoretical additions "democracy with adjectives" (Collier and Levitsky 1997). They mainly argued that creating artificial subtypes of hybrid regimes will alter the general understanding of the processes that impede the establishment of fully fledge democracies.

In this regard, competitive authoritarianism emerged as one of the first major conceptual and theoretical approach to assess the variations of hybrid regimes. Portrayed as an umbrella concept, competitive authoritarianism is mainly dealing with the structural instruments that preserve/alter authoritarian rule. Therefore, "competitive authoritarianism is a civilian regime where democratic institutions exist and are largely perceived as means of gaining political influence in an uneven playing field" (Levitsky and Way 2010, 5). Such regimes allow political competitors as far as incumbents can maintain lively international relations and their positions are not endangered by internal opposition (Levitsky and Way 2002; 2010). Moreover, access to resources (economic, societal, human) is constantly obstructed by the ruling elites, the opposition forces being tolerated for the sake of play.

Competitive authoritarianism has three major dimensions: linkage to the West, international leverage, and internal organizational power (Levitsky and Way 2010; Bogaards and Elischer 2016; Bieber 2018; Levitsky and Way 2020). Firstly, Western countries are perceived as the only international actors able to properly promote democratic change. They have a broad portfolio of means, ranging from strong ties with the local opposition to economic sanctions against the authoritarian incumbents. Thus, linkages have certain degrees and could take the shape

of economic stimulation, transnational civil society, or cultural ties (Levitsky and Way 2005; Van den Bosch 2015). Additionally, linkages may affect authoritarian stability by reshaping the internal balance of power by supporting pro-Western domestic stakeholders (Levitsky and Way 2005).

Secondly, linkages are to a certain extent connected to leverages. Both could work simultaneously at different levels of intensity. An international actor could decide to enforce punitive measures against an unfavorable or hostile domestic leader, party, or elite group. However, it should be emphasized that leverages are related to the "capacity" of incumbents to be exposed to international pressure (Levitsky and Way 2010, 40). Consequently, three primary factors should be considered when assessing leverages: the size and power of the state exposed to leverages, to what extent Western states' foreign affairs priorities are overlapping as well as the ability of "black knights" (autocracy promoters) to interfere with Western-backed leverages" (Levitsky and Way 2010, 42; Tolstrup 2015).

Thirdly, organizational power should be referred to as a domestic interplay of influence between the incumbent and the opposition groups (Levitsky and Way 2010; Tolstrup 2013; 2014). In competitive authoritarian regimes, the ruling elites are capable to alter the negative effects of social and economic tensions through a well-established organizational power (Levitsky and Way 2010, 66-70). It was observed that post-Communist states in Eastern Europe have inherited a massive organizational power characterized by a high level of cohesion and a wide range of scopes. However, this setup was insufficient to permanently preserve the inconclusive state of play. Historical linkages to the West of countries such as Albania, Slovenia, and Croatia, pushed the incumbents to make major compromises to democratization forces (Levitsky and Way 2010). Therefore, in the absence of firm linkages and leverages, domestic conditions alone are not enough to guide the path toward a functional democracy.

1.1.3 Successful democratizations and failed transitions

To a certain extent, it is unknown how exogenous factors and domestic forces interact to promote a successful transition to democracy. In the absence of a binding element between external influence and internal actors, the majority of scholars preferred to focus their attention on a single side of the coin. Contagion and linkages are mainly considered key premises for successful democratization (Castaldo 2022). For instance, Taiwan benefited from both, since the U.S. presence in the region acted both as a factor that activated the democratic contagion in the neighborhood (South Korea, Japan, Taiwan) and assured the necessary links of these countries over the black-knight activities of China and Russia (Auklend 2022). In Europe, the context was a bit different, because the prospect of EU membership guided successful transitions in the Baltic countries (Tufur 2022) and, to a certain extent, in Turkey (Lipská 2022).

Internally, the incumbents' organizational power was undermined by two overlapping phenomena, civil society mobilization and party-system reformation. Civil society organizations backed by the young generation (Bawana 2022) and middle-class groups (Auklend 2022) were able to stimulate massive mobilizations against the autocratic elite and to push for an even playing field (Stuppert 2020). Civil society will try to translate these movements into political demands such as free elections and a multi-party system (Malik 2022; Bawana 2022). Additionally, incumbents may be contested by reformist groups of the regime (Stepan 1991). The interaction between society and opposition political groups works as an interdependent relationship, with successful democratization being devoted to a common effort. However, it is debatable whether such domestic factors would have the same degree of success without proactive external support.

Nonetheless, external linkages and leverages are both the solution and the problem of the democratization process. Clumsy interferences could affect the democratic indices and generate

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grievances domestically. From a societal point of view, Western-led democratic assistance proved to be in massive contradictions to internal practices (Carothers 2020), since in countries such as Iraq (Big-Alabo and Nte 2022) and Turkey (Çalıkoğlu 2022; Eslen-Ziya and Kazanoğlu 2022) linkages to the West have created polarization and impeded the proper development of a democratic system. Additionally, unintended effects could be identified over the electoral system too. In post-uprising contexts, the external lobby for fast and free elections could endanger the ability of opposition groups to form coalitions (Grubman 2022) as well as the level of domestic confidence over the electoral outcome (Cheibub, Limongi, and Przeworski 2022). Therefore, a tailored approach would be preferred for fragile internal contexts where linkages and leverages should act complementary to domestic factors.

1.1.4 Diplomacy or how to coach democratization

The traditional paradigm of transition to democracy has proven to be incomplete mainly due to the *one fits all* approach of promoting classical liberal democracy in all contexts (Jahn 2007b). Inconclusive combinations between external democratic interferences and heterogeneity of domestic contexts triggered general resistance and reluctance towards the democratization process beyond the Western world (Jahn 2007). This perfectible framework may take advantage of diplomacy and its main attributes. Globalization and digitalization transformed profoundly the work of diplomats, the new wave of practitioners being more oriented to effective mass communication and proactive salient negotiations (Lisiecka-Zurowska, 2019). Apart from the state-centered viewpoint on democratic transition, diplomacy itself as a profession is in the process of democratization (Lisiecka-Zurowska 2019). Diplomacy is no more a closed-door and untransparent way of conducting foreign policy. With an adjusted militant attitude and a broad variation in its application, diplomacy could easily shape the current liberal institutions for the

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better. For instance, strong public diplomacy campaigns such as the one for the Ottawa Process on antipersonnel mines strengthen the partnership between governments and civil society (Cameron 1998). By implementing innovative tactics, diplomacy managed to expand its applicability beyond the traditional means, which led to opening new avenues of inquiry.

Diplomacy as a key instrument of democratization could be perceived twofold. Firstly, at a state level, diplomacy works as a fundamental instrument of national foreign policies. Depending on their capabilities, ambitions, and ideology, states could decide to use diplomacy as a key promoter of democracy in certain regions and contexts. A major example in this respect is the United States. The U.S. State Department has tried for decades to reshape its "liberal diplomacy" by decoupling its strategy from the old-fashioned democracy promotion approaches (Jahn 2007). An important contribution to this reshuffle was possible due to Tadeusz Mazowiecki. The first Prime-Minister of democratic Poland has convinced top U.S. officials and diplomats to assist the Polish transition to democracy as a distinctive case, separate from other ex-Communist countries (Fatalski, 2017). Nonetheless, democratization through national diplomats has its own problems. Diplomats are highly dependent on domestic politicians and how the state leadership decides to frame foreign policy. The limits of a diplomatic mandate could be easily observed during the UN General Assemblies voting (Zohny 2017) or when it comes to para-diplomacy, where subnational entities are in general unable to underpin major foreign affairs endeavors (Nganje 2014).

Secondly, international organizations have emerged as essential democratic hubs where states and/or institutions could upload their norms and procedures for users under transition. This type of instrument offered a unique opportunity for aspiring regional state actors to be actively engaged with hybrid/autocratic regimes in norms' diffusion activities. Such interactions could take the form of bilateral/multilateral meetings and can set the framework for further agreements and

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exchanges of good practices. A valuable instrument is the Constructive Engagement foreign affairs strategy which could mitigate the ideological and political regimes differences at the international level (Aryani 2019). Using this framework states can act as coaches of democratization and engage in diplomatic persuasion missions with competitive authoritarian regimes (Aryani 2019).

Additionally, international organizations with their own diplomatic service could embark on democracy promotion activities too. European Union is permanently using its institutions to advance democratization inside or outside its borders (Bátora 2005). Within the Union, Brussels is trying to improve national democracy through sticks and carrots persuading the Members States to download and enact EU regulations (Groß and Grimm 2014; 2016; Grimm and Weiffen 2018). For non-EU countries, European Parliament (EP) and European External Action Service (EEAS) took active measures to support pro-democratic movements during the Arab Spring (Reimprecht and Levin 2015) as well as to enhance the resilience of Turkish civil society (Dagi 2004).

1.2   Democratization through Europeanization

1.2.1   Europeanization. The "top-down" exportation of norms

To process of advancing the status of democracy by interaction at the EU level is called "Europeanization". In short, Europeanization implies a wide process of exporting the European Union's practices and government model to a national or sub-national context (Knill and Lehmkuhl 1999; Dinan 2000; Olsen 2002). Since the core values of the EU are highly embedded in democratic practices, Europeanization has become a subset of democratization. The general approach to Europeanization is to consider it a "top-down" process, while European integration is mostly a bottom-up procedure (Schmidt 2009; Schimmelfennig 2018). Depending on the elements used, Europeanization could work as a mechanism of democratic improvement for EU institutions

or as norms provider for domestic politics, inside or outside the Union (Buller and Gamble 2002). Thus, the effectiveness of Europeanization resides in external incentives that could be used as either conditionalities or rewards (Schimmelfennig and Sedelmeier 2004). However, for a positive outcome of external incentives, it is crucial to take into account variables such as the credibility of conditionalities/rewards, the domestic desire to adhere to EU norms, and the adoption costs (Schimmelfennig and Sedelmeier 2004; 2005).

The Europeanization process is applied to a wide range of fields, from administrative reforms to human rights improvements. National foreign policies were among those core domestic elements adjusted by Europeanization. The process of Europeanization of national foreign policies worked in two separate ways. Firstly, the concept of "download" refers to cross-national convergent adoptions of EU practices and interests, by the alignment of the national MFAs to the Union's Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP). Secondly, Member States were able to "upload" and lobby their foreign affairs preferences at the European level (Wong and Hill 2011). By pushing for the internalization of convergent foreign policies, the EU was capable of effectively pursuing its external objective, developing a wide portfolio of commercial and democracy promotion outside Europe (Schimmelfennig 2015; Gafuri 2022). Therefore, according to Wong & Hill Europeanization is framed as a "bi-directional process" where national and European foreign policy interests are engaging in a "cross-loading mechanism" dependent on "agents, targets and direction of change" (Wong and Hill 2011, 4-5)

1.2.2 The convergence between national and European foreign policy

As explained above, Europeanization is a practice of socialization and internalization of norms (de Flers and Müller 2010; 2012). Step by step, Member States started to be more involved in supporting activities at the international level to enhance the presence of EU interest in various

contexts related to democracy promotion abroad (Smith 2017). Adhering to EU values transformed the way Member States perceived their role in the world, offering a unique opportunity for states such as Austria, France, and Portugal to strengthen their presence outside Europe (Raimundo 2013; Müller 2013; Robinson 2016; Pavlovsky 2019). Additionally, the Europeanization of foreign policy has produces structural changes in the administrative section of the national MFAs (Agnantopoulos 2010; Hlepas 2020). For instance, the Finnish MFA was able at a certain point to renegotiate its internal position of influence within the government (Rua 2008). MFAs suffered a considerable transformation process as a result, which called for constant improvement of their day-to-day diplomatic operations as well as familiarization of their diplomatic systems with European practices and procedures. (Bátora 2003; 2005).

Nonetheless, the patterns of Europeanization are not uniform, especially when it comes to the most recent members of the EU (Bátora 2012). Despite sharing a common ex-Communist past, it appears that several countries in Central and Eastern Europe are still unwilling to fully align their national foreign policies with European standards in reference to relations with Russia and China. (Crombois 2019). Severe gaps in attitude could be observed in the case of enlargement too. Even though Turkey embarked on the Europeanization path at a certain point in time and has used "Europe" as a justification tool for some reforms, the EU Member States were unable to reach unanimity on the European prospects of Ankara (Ustun 2010; Oguzlu 2010; Demirta¸ 2015; Ayaz Avan 2019).

A "De-Europeanization" tendency may emerge when the lack of compliance with EU incentives and conditions intensifies. There are two factors that contribute to the reverse of Europeanization. Firstly, an exponential shift in domestic politics may freeze or backslide the process of downloading norms. To capture political support, national parties and leaders are

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tempted to promote an anti-EU rhetoric or to adopt controversial policies (Dyduch and Müller 2021; Monteleone 2021). Likewise, incumbents may try to negatively influence, adjust or even block European foreign policy developments for additional political capital (Hettyey 2021). Secondly, Member States could decide to intentionally freeze the adoption of norms to preserve their relationship with a third-party actor, which was, for instance, the case of Estonia during the era of Donald Trump (Raik and Rikmann 2021).

1.2.3 Norm diffusion – the pipeline of Europeanization

By assessing the effectiveness of norm diffusion, one can gain deeper understanding of the success of Europeanization. Thus, norm diffusion could be approached as the process of exporting and transferring certain EU policies, regulations, and practices inside and outside the Union's borders. There are two major views on how the diffusion may be analyzed. First, the transfer-centered argument highlights the process of internalization of norms through external sticks and carrots (Baltag and Burmester 2022). Second, the constructivist approach is focused on the socialization part of diffusion, asserting that states adapt to Europeanization through bilateral and multilateral interactions (Baltag and Burmester 2022). However, while the former assertion can overcome domestic shortcomings, the latter is directly dependent on the domestic elite's desire to adopt certain norms and to get engaged with their international counterparts (Dandashly and Noutcheva 2022; Khakee 2022; Weilandt 2022).

The ability to diffuse norms is related to two overlapping influence mechanisms. Direct influence mechanisms include external coercion actions, socialization and persuasion activities, and capacity-building incentives (Börzel and Risse 2017). Additionally, diffusion could happen through indirect means, namely competition with other regional actors, emulation towards a prospective European path, and mimicry of policies and behaviors (Börzel and Risse 2017). In

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practice, norm diffusion could be used by both pro-democratic and autocratic forces. For instance, Russia has continuously exported regionally three sets of norms on sovereign choice, political regimes, and conservative behaviors (Casier 2022). Before the full-scale invasion of Ukraine, to counterbalance Russian influence in Eastern Neighborhood, European Union tried to export pro-democratic norms beyond its borders, although with limited success (Baltag and Burmester 2022; Delcour 2022; Youngs 2022).

1.2.4   Instruments of Europeanization. From agents to lobby activities

The Europeanization process is inextricably related to normative power. The latter emerged as a subset of soft power and is mainly dealing with the effectiveness of norm diffusion in a top-down framework. The traditional approach of European normative power implies a process of including the essential cognitive practices at the domestic level through five core categories of norms: freedom, democracy, human rights, peace, and the EU's acquis (Manners 2002). Normative power's efficiency may be assessed by monitoring six major factors of diffusion: contagion, informational diffusion, procedural diffusion, open diffusion, transferability index, and cultural filters (Manners 2002). European Union is using normative power jointly as coercion and an inspirational tool to provide current and prospective members with a distinctive identity at the international level (Hill 2010; Diez and Pace 2011). However, there are still improvements to be made. In relation to Eastern Neighborhood countries, the EU has a long record of acting prudentially through stealth intervention strategies and avoiding for decades to have firm commitments (Popescu 2011).

The potential of European normative power to motivate and change former targets into agents of Europeanization is one of its unique characteristics. According to the literature, newly admitted members of the European Union are more likely to share their knowledge and newly

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acquired skills outside the Union's borders, fostering the development of European identity abroad. (Flockhart 2008; Berti, Mikulova, and Popescu 2016). For instance, Central and Eastern Europe Member States have a shared ex-Communist past and are capable of intimately understanding the type of reforms needed by their non-EU counterparts (Berti, Mikulova, and Popescu 2016). After the EU accession, civil society has started to contribute to the Europeanization process abroad. Many NGOs and think tanks from Poland and Czech Republic found themselves empowered both domestically and in relation to the ability to underpin external democracy promotion activities (Nielsen, Berg, and Roll 2009; Sudbery 2010; Klásková and Císař 2021). However, the power of domestic societal actors to become full-fledged agents of Europeanization is quite limited (Warleigh 2001), in general, their actions being complementary to a more extensive state-backed diffusion of norms.

Therefore, to improve their presence at the EU level and to shape the agenda, states have embarked on lobby activities. As a general practice, lobbying employs the use of material and non-material resources to advance a singular or a collective interest in a certain context (Weiler and Brändli 2015; Matsueda 2020; Stevens and De Bruycker 2020). At the EU level, there is a dedicated framework for lobbying activities, the European Commission and other institutions trying to accommodate the preferences of a wide range of stakeholders (Bunea 2019). Interest groups are often the ones who lobby, and how effective they are depends greatly on the informational and material resources they have access to, as well as how much influence they have on key decision-makers and individuals. (Marshall 2010; De Bruycker and Beyers 2015; Hermansson 2016; Flöthe 2019). While the traditional meaning of lobbying is mainly related to private groups (Beqiri, Shatku, and Sadushaj 2015; Ehrlich and Jones 2016; Atikcan and Chalmers

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2019), public entities are also able to undertake such activities (Van Hecke, Bursens, and Beyers 2016).

Lobbying and diplomacy are interdependent concepts, the former being instrumentalized by the latter. While lobbyists and diplomacy share the same arena of acquiring influence (Hanegraaff, Beyers, and De Bruycker 2016), at the EU level diplomatic activities are not necessary considered as lobbying. Therefore, the concepts in normally applied in relations to non-EU states involved in complex accession, economic, cultural, or structural discussion with the European Union as separate counterpart. However, the positive outcome of third country lobbying is mostly linked with their openness to adapt and/or adopt the EU regulations and policy making procedures (Oancă 2015; Korkea-Aho 2016). Since the relations between third countries and the EU fall under the umbrella of the Europeanization framework, countries like Turkey have established an effective learning process through which they have been able to steer clear of controversial subjects and prioritize financial and commercial dealings. (Firat 2016; 2019). Thus, there is a stringent need to clarify the understanding of diplomatic lobbying activities under the Europeanization framework.

1.3 Coaching and Lobbying Europeanization Abroad. Romania and the Republic of Moldova

1.3.1 Romania. A successful case of Europeanization

Romania may be assessed as a successful case of an ex-Communist country turned into an agent of Europeanization. In the 1990s Romania made a slow and to some extent incomplete transition to Europeanization. Endemic high-level corruption, uneven political playing field, and the fluctuant economic situation have negatively affected Romania's EU membership

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prospectives. Gradually domestic policies have converged with the EU acquis and regulations, although Romanian national politics continued to act divergently towards external pro-democratic incentives (Denca 2009; 2010; Micu 2011). However, the mirage of generous financial rewards and the favorable societal terrain have stimulated the internal political elite to increase the pace of Europeanization in Romania.

After its 2007 accession, Romanian foreign policy was amongst the most effective downloaders of European norms in comparison to other governmental sectors. The dawn of its EU membership portrayed Romania as an actor unprepared to actively influence Brussel's agenda on foreign affairs. Therefore, in an early stage, Romanian foreign policy-makers were satisfied to simply assist the national implementation of EU conditionalities. Thereafter, Romania realized the benefits of a common foreign policy and started to pursue its regional interests, hence transforming the country into both a pillar of the Euro-Atlantic security setup, as well as a leading broker of influence for Brussels activities in the Eastern Neighborhood (I. Anghelescu 2011). Moreover, the proximity to Russia and its privileged relationship with the Republic of Moldova recently transformed Romania into a regional power and a key voice on certain European foreign policy matters (Bossuyt 2017; Anghelescu 2021). Therefore, being constrained to keep pace with fast external developments, the Romanian diplomatic system has been challenged to rapidly adapt to the new realities (Popescu 2010).

Making the transition from downloader to uploader, Romanian became an agent of Europeanization. Through its EU-level initiatives, Romania was able to successfully transition toward lobbying actions to export democratic practices in the region. (Șoitu and Șoitu 2010). An important ingredient was the involvement of the Romanian civil society organizations in cross-border activities with their counterparts from Moldova and Ukraine (Șoitu and Șoitu 2010).

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Additionally, Romania was able to project its interests by lobbying for a macro multinational structure able to enhance regional cooperation by sponsoring the creation of the Three Seas Initiative (Bunescu 2020).

1.3.2 Tough mission - the Europeanization of Moldova

As a post-Soviet state, Moldova inherited a complex political environment. Since the 1990s, political life in Moldova was split between pro-Europeans and others. Socialist, Communist, and Agrarian shared cyclically political power with democratic elites, balancing Moldova's orientation either to the West or to the Russian Federation (Cantir and Kennedy 2015; Delcour 2018). The soft balancing of Moldova was fueled by its internal ethnic and cultural polarization of two opposite groups: Moldovans and the Russian minority (March 2007). Therefore, as a country in transition to democracy, Moldova has been characterized by a strange political playing field where no political block has the decisive means to acquire the entire power (LWay 2002; 2003). The inconclusive domestic context has affected the Europeanization process even though Moldova has been permanently under the EU radar.

As an undecided aspirant to EU membership, Moldova has selectively downloaded European-inspired norms (Baltag and Burmester 2022). Similarly to Romania, the Republic of Moldova received pro-democratic norms and practices from the European Union, which supported the local NGOs (Ciceo 2020; Baltag and Burmester 2022). However, the smoothness of the Europeanization process was highly reliant on the nature and interests of the internal political elite. Recent Moldovan governments, however, have demonstrated a preference for carefully adapting European principles to the local context, which has improved the process of policy implementation. (Baltag and Burmester 2022). The Association Agreement between the EU and the Republic of Moldova has been the main vehicle for the diffusion of norms since 2014, with

Moldova importing European standards for a variety of industries, from administrative reform to the standardization of goods. (Varzari and Varzari 2013; Morari 2014).

Direct diplomatic interactions were a key component of Moldova's incentives for Europeanization. Thanks to the European External Action Service and European Delegation, which are evolving into centers of socialization and change that do away with outmoded financial-aid procedures and reforms demands, the EU is able to maintain tight ties with domestic Moldovan politicians. (Baltag and Smith 2015; Baltag 2018). Likewise, an alternative form of Europeanization implies direct and local paradiplomacy with counterparts from the EU Member States (Cantir 2022). The Visegrad Group has also started to mentor Moldova in order to increase its diplomatic engagement with the European Neighborhood Policy (Marušiak 2020). The Republic of Moldova must take advantage of unexpected diplomatic and global attention to make its path to EU membership as easy as possible.

2 Theoretical framework and methodology: member states as agents of Europeanization

2.1 Theoretical framework

2.1.1 The theory of norm diffusion

Europeanization happens only under the presence of a "misfit" between domestic and EU-level norms and through internal factors that are responsible for adaptation and inducement of a need for change (Börzel and Risse 2000; 2003; 2012). Thus, the process of transferring European norms from Brussels to a specific state or set of states, whether they are EU members or not, is known as norm diffusion. Strictly to the scope of this paper, norm diffusion should be understood as a bi-directional phenomenon through which Member States are incentivized to "download" the European norms as well as to "upload" their preferences to shape the format of Europeanization (Börzel 2002, 193). Member states behavior towards the process of norm diffusion may be divided into three separate stages, 1) "pace-setting" – states are able to actively shape the European policies, 2) "foot-dragging" – states are reluctant to engage with the flow of norms, and 3) "fence-sitting" - a neutral state between the desire to "upload" and the need to "download" norms (Börzel 2002, 193).

There are two distinct levels to assess diffusion, cognitive and normative. The cognitive level refers to different types of "causal beliefs" and/or knowledge (Börzel and Risse 2009, p.5). These beliefs are info-packs collectively shared by a group of states and capable to frame the relationship among them (Börzel and Risse 2009). The normative level of ideas is tackling a set of beliefs rooted in a presumed mutual identity where the group is expecting similar behaviors

(Börzel and Risse 2009). Both levels of diffusion are accompanied either by compliance (soft persuasion) or conditionality (assertive incentives) (Börzel and Risse 2009a).

It should be added that diffusion involves two sets of mechanisms. Firstly, direct mechanisms may employ four variations: coercion, manipulation of utility calculation, socialization, and persuasion (Börzel and Risse 2009b; 2014; 2017). Coercion is the process of convincing the target to deliver the expected outcome by legal or military force (Börzel and Risse 2009b; 2014; 2017). Manipulation of utility calculation is divided into positive and negative incentives and aims to influence other actors to import ideas through rewards (funds, assistance) or sanctions and domestic opposition stimulation (Börzel and Risse 2009b; 2014; 2017). When compared to manipulation and persuasion, diffusion through socialization places more of an emphasis on the spread of ideas. (Börzel and Risse 2009b; 2014; 2017). These three mechanisms are completed by persuasion, which promotes ideas branded as legitimate and reasonable (Börzel and Risse 2009b; 2014; 2017).

Secondly, indirect mechanisms of diffusion imply a rather passive promotion of norms and are characterized by emulation and its three subsets: competition, lesson drawing, and mimicry. . Competition (Börzel and Risse 2009b; 2014; 2017) is a functional form of emulation and involves a group of actors that compete to achieve a higher level of performance (Europeanization (Börzel and Risse 2009b; 2014; 2017). Lesson drawing is a functional emulation too and has evolved as an "inspirational" mechanism, with states trying to implement policies used by others for similar problems (Börzel and Risse 2009b; 2014; 2017). Mimicry is a type of normative emulation used by actors to increase legitimacy, imitating successful cases of Europeanization to acquire additional international credentials (Börzel and Risse 2009b; 2014; 2017).

2.1.2 Defining concepts: member states as Europeanization norm entrepreneurs

For this research, diplomatic training is assessed as a cumulative set of practices and knowledge management. In terms of practices, national and international diplomatic institutes, analyzed as institutions responsible for crafting and implementing training programs, are entitled to transfer a certain amount of knowledge from the epistemic community of scholars and practitioners to internal and external diplomats. The transfer of practices (diffusion) is made through a comprehensive curriculum that aims to enhance specific competencies and skills. Likewise, diplomatic training works as a hub of socialization, setting the perspective for further inter-institutional and/or transnational cooperation (Frattini 2010). Moreover, diplomatic training may serve as a torch-passing mechanism from senior to entry-level diplomats assuring the continuity of diplomatic services (Androniceanu and Sora 2009).

However, theories on Europeanization and norm diffusion are mainly silent on the Member States as agents of Europeanization outside the EU. To enhance the understanding of the mechanisms and influence of Europeanization through Member States outside Europe, this research has imported the theoretical framework of Finnemore & Sikkink on International Norm Dynamics (Finnemore and Sikkink 1998). Therefore, Romania will be assessed as an agent of Europeanization outside the EU which acts as a norm entrepreneur. Norms as defined as a set of common practices and shared assessments that generate "standard behaviors and agreements among a critical mass of actors" (Finnemore and Sikkink 1998, p. 891). The norm entrepreneurs emerge inside of norm cycles, the latter being composed of three stages. First, "norm emergence" is rooted in the entrepreneur's ability to persuade an actor and/or a critical mass of actors to "embrace new norms" (Finnemore and Sikkink 1998, pp. 193-195). Second, during norm acceptance/norm cascades processes – states engage in socializing activities with other states "to

become norm followers" (Finnemore and Sikkink 1998, pp. 193-195). Norm acceptance is taking advantage of target states to obtain international legitimacy and credentials. Third, the internalization stage occurs when the "norm acquires a taken-for-granted quality" at the governmental and public opinion level (Finnemore and Sikkink 1998, p. 195).

Norm entrepreneurship is a common strategy that enables small and medium states to project their influence in certain geographic proximity or globally (Ingebritsen 2002). To reach norm entrepreneurship status, countries have to fulfill two conditions: 1) to obtain specific markers that trace the line between eligible and non-eligible states in terms of norm diffusion and 2) to reach a superior degree of recognition inside the community that legitimate further diffusion endeavors (Ward 2019, p. 214). After its 2007 accession to the European Union, Romania was for several years under the process of acquiring the markers (download of European practices and regulations). Instead, due to its regional initiatives (e.g., Three Seas Initiatives, B9 Format, etc.) and the assertive Russian actions in the Eastern Neighborhood, Romania has recently received community recognition as a regional pillar and agent of Europeanization. Therefore, Romania has started to be an active and effective agent of Europeanization, developing a two-level norm entrepreneurship approach: coaching and lobbying.

The coaching aspect of Romanian norm entrepreneurship activities involves a set of supportive tools offered to EU candidate states to facilitate their preparatory accession steps. As a coach of Europeanization, Romania developed two distinctive dimensions. First, the coaching dimension is understood as a rigorous and comprehensive training scheme offered to external partners to enable the transfer of practices and skills related to the EU accession process. Training may take the form of traditional academic classes or practice-oriented exercises. While the classes are meant to transfer specific knowledge through lectures and direct interactions with renowned

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scholars and top experts, the applicative part of training may involve simulations of expected or unexpected scenarios. Second, the mentorship dimension employs a recognized level of expertise in relevant areas and the ability of a state to be perceived as a trusted adviser able to guide the candidate state through the process of EU accession.

Complementary to its coaching activities, Romania acts as a lobbyist at the EU level. Being a norm entrepreneur, Romania set the EU agenda by using a "venue/forum shopping" approach. Lobbying through venue shopping implies a strategic selection of preferences and the use of policy venues to obtain support and raise awareness of specific topics (Princen and Kerremans 2008; Murphy and Kellow 2013; Eckhardt and De Bièvre 2015). Therefore, in terms of foreign policy preferences Romania behaves in line with the general strategies of new EU Member States and prioritizes its regional interest, such as the Eastern Neighborhood and the Black Sea (Baun and Marek 2013). Lobbying to include a national foreign policy goal at the European level determines improved access to EU instruments and resources (Keukeleire and Delreux 2014).

2.1.3 Operationalization: Romania as a coach and lobbyist for Moldova in the EU

The coaching and lobbying dimension of Romanian norm entrepreneurship dynamics shall be operationalized as follows. Firstly, the diplomatic training provided by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs – Romanian Diplomatic Institute serves as the main reference to determine the extent to which Romania is transferring EU-related norms and practices to their counterparts in the Republic of Moldova. Since diplomatic training has lately become available to non-Romanians, it will offer valuable data on both dimensions of an expertized rooted coach of norms and a trusted advisor (mentorship). Additionally, diplomatic training as a key instrument of coaching opens the door for short- and medium-term evaluation of its influence over the efficiency of norm diffusion. Assuming that the fundamental objective of Romanian diplomatic training offered to the Republic

of Moldova is to equip diplomats with the knowledge and skills required for an effective EU accession process, it would be easy to track the degree of norm adaptation of the target group.

Secondly, the evaluation of the lobbying dimension of Romania at the EU shall be performed in this research through the set of pro-Moldova actions taken by the Romanian diplomats at the Foreign Affairs Council and European Council Summits. A successful lobbying strategy needs to highlight 1) the Romanian ability to upload its national foreign affairs preferences at the EU level by setting the agenda (venue shopping) in favor of Moldova's candidate status acquirement and 2) Romanian endeavors as a norm entrepreneur to gain community recognition and legitimacy in Moldova-related issues. Additionally, compiling both dimensions of coaching and lobbying will offer the opportunity to further operationalize the concept of agent of Europeanization perceived as a norm entrepreneur outside EU borders.

2.2 Methodology

2.2.1 Case selection, research question, and argument

Case selection implies a comprehensive assessment of a single or small cluster of cases and aims to shed light on an extensive population of cases (Gerring and Cojocaru 2016, 394). For this research a deviant case framework will be used due to its capacity to assess causal patterns of a single case study. In this regard, deviant cases may explain certain anomalies and could provide generalizable hypotheses and thoughtful revisions "to the scope conditions of a theory" (Gerring and Cojocaru 2016, p. 399).

Considering $1 + Z$ Y the formula of deviant case selections, where 1 is the selected case and Y (outcome) is poorly explained by Z (background factors of interests), it is required to advance additional scope conditions for X (theory) (Gerring and Cojocaru 2016, p. 195). Applying Gerring

& Cojocaru's framework to this research, 1 = Romania is considered an agent of Europeanization that acts as a complementary norm entrepreneur to EU's norm diffusion toolbox, Y = Moldova's EU accession process as a candidate state, Z = Black knights' interferences in Moldova are unable to alter pro-democratic norm entrepreneurship, results in a demand of X = traditional theory of European norm diffusion to be amended.

The thesis investigates how new Member States, such as Romania, use foreign policy tools to aid the Europeanization of EU prospective members, such as the Republic of Moldova. Therefore, this paper argues that diplomacy and diplomatic training are two of the key multi-level norm diffusion methods employed by Romania and its Ministry of Foreign Affairs in support of Moldova's EU accession process. In this model, Romania is conceived of as a complementary agent of Europeanization, employing a bi-dimensional strategy of norm entrepreneurship. First, Romania is complementing the EU-led Europeanization endeavors through a coaching dimension. As a coach, Romania is able to 1) provide expertise-based knowledge transfer to Moldova through diplomatic training and 2) offer guidance and follow-up support to Moldova as a trusted advisor. Second, the lobbying dimension of Romania refers to its capacity to upload foreign affairs preferences at the EU level and to be recognized inside the international community as a frontline player in Moldova's efforts to join the European Union.

The relevance of Romania as a norm entrepreneur in relation to Moldova in the deviant case approach within the traditional theory of European norm diffusion rests on two aspects. First, according to Börzel & Risse's theoretical framework, Romania as a new EU member state with a post-Communist background is expected to 1) remain a net downloader of norms, 2) have a limited potential to upload its foreign policy preferences at the EU level, and 3) have a relatively poor norm diffusion toolbox for non-EU states. Second, Romania is a *sui generis* case within the

European Union, being the only Member State with a deep and multidimensional connection with a candidate state, since Romania and Moldova share a recent historical, cultural, and administrative background.

2.2.2 Data collection

This research is grounded in both primary and secondary data. Primary data involves a questionnaire with 19 respondents, namely diplomats, and administrative officials from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and European Integration of the Republic of Moldova and the Government of the Republic of Moldova. Additionally, six semi-structured interviews were conducted with EEAS (1) and Moldovan (4) diplomats. Secondary data involves Romanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs official reports, Romanian Diplomatic Institute training reports, and Foreign Affairs Council and European Council Statements. The entire dataset provides insightful information to assess the coaching and lobbying dimension of Romania as an agent of Europeanization that acts as a complementary norm entrepreneur.

Regarding primary data, there are some aspects to be emphasized. First, the questionnaire was circulated among the Moldovan participants of the tailored training course organized by the Romanian Diplomatic Institute and dedicated to officials in charge of Moldova's EU accession process (23 – 29 October 2022). The questionnaire was structured into three separate sections 1) general data, 2) feedback for the entire program 3) follow-up actions and implementation of knowledge. The response rate was 95 % (19 out of 20 participants). Semi-structured interviews were conducted in May 2023, with each interview being divided into three parts 1) Moldova's diplomatic interactions with the EU (EEAS), 2), Moldova's diplomatic interaction with Romania, and 3) Romania's diplomatic interaction at the EU level in Moldova-related issues. Likewise, the secondary dataset is concerning the post-February 2022 events, when the full-scale invasion of

Ukraine by the Russian Federation has amplified discussion on the need to grant the EU candidate status to Moldova.

Second, the interviews were carried out in a semi-structured, snowball fashion. The interviews included diplomats involved in Moldova's Europeanization process, European Diplomatic Academy participants, and EEAS Management personnel. Through direct participation in areas of interest for this research, the diplomats interviewed provided insightful and expertise-based opinions on the importance of diplomatic training and the nature of the Romania-Moldova relationship in the context of Europeanization.

2.2.3 Data analysis

To be in line with the datasets prepared for this research, questionnaires and discourse analysis will serve as the main analytical instrument. This technique is preferable to others due to its capacity to trace meaningful connections between text and context (Gill 2000). Data were collected and structured in accordance with an analytical framework composed of two major dimensions. The coaching dimension of the Romanian foreign policy in relation to the Republic of Moldova will be analyzed by assessing the expertise-rooted transfer of knowledge and the mentorship side of coaching through diplomatic training. In this regard, both the questionnaires and semi-structured interviews comprise a set of specific questions: *How do you evaluate the lectures? How do you intend to apply the knowledge acquired? How do you assess your relationship with Romanian counterparts?* Moreover, to stress the idea of continuity and tradition of norm diffusion through diplomatic training, a set of official and archive documents of the Romanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs were analyzed.

Likewise, the lobbying dimension is analyzed through the Romanian ability to upload its preferences at the EU level and to influence the agenda in this regard. To analyze the efficiency of

Romanian lobbying activities, two major foreign affairs successes of the Republic of Moldova serve as references: 1) the EU-candidate state status awarded to Moldova in 2022 and 2) the decision upon the organization of the 2023 European Political Community Summit in Chisinau. To assess the contribution of Romanian foreign policy to the above-mentioned events, the semi-structured interviews included questions related to the joint Romania-Moldova diplomatic and institutional endeavors at the European level. Additionally, the discourse analysis was particularly useful when assessing the lobbying dimension since it offered the instruments to link the Foreign Affairs Council and European Council declarations to Romanian ability to upload its Moldova-related policy preferences to the EU level.

3 Romania - norm coach and lobbyist for Moldova's Europeanization process

This chapter presents empirical data on the coaching and lobbying aspects of Romanian diplomacy in Moldova's accession process. It investigates the contribution of Romanian diplomatic training as a complement to the EU's efforts to export Europeanization to Moldova. This complementary aspect is examined through the activities of the Romanian Diplomatic Institute and the Diplomatic Academy of the European External Action Service. As a positive outcome of diplomatic training, Romania's follow-up actions and mentoring efforts to Moldova receive special emphasis. Finally, this chapter presents the results and contributions of the thesis to the literature, both theoretical and empirical.

3.1 Analysis: Romanian diplomacy and its norm entrepreneurship in Moldova

3.1.1 Romanian diplomatic training and knowledge transfer

The Romanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs has its own Diplomatic Institute (IDR) which acts as the leading national entity responsible for training and expertise provided to the Ministry and other administrative authorities (Guvernul Romaniei 2005). There is a general practice among European MFAs and beyond to possess educational and think-tank facilities to ease their access to expertise and training resources. We may find similar examples in Estonia, Austria, Bulgaria, France and other countries. However, IDR has a particularity in comparison to its European counterparts. While most of the similar diplomatic institutes are organized as separate bodies without direct legal biding with the Ministry (e.g., Estonia School of Diplomacy is an NGO), IDR is linked directly to the decisional flow, since the Romanian Minister of Foreign Affairs acts as

the President of the institution seconded by a general director (Guvernul Romaniei 2005). This legal framework improves hierarchical communication and the influence of IDR services on the decision-making process.

Traditionally, IDR provides training for different levels of national diplomats and organizes the six-month initial training for entry-level Foreign Service personnel. Additionally, to be in line with other European institutes, IDR has recently started to offer training for external diplomats, one example being the Foreign Diplo program dedicated to Sub-Saharan and Caribbean diplomats (Romanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs 2018; Romanian Agency for Development and International Cooperation 2019a). However, due to its regional interests and privileged relationship with the Republic of Moldova, Romania was one of the first countries that offered diplomatic training to Moldovan Foreign Service personnel, starting from 1991 with "Nicolae Titulescu International Courses" (Romanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs n.d.). Moreover, after its institutional establishment in 2005, IDR has organized almost yearly training courses for Moldovan diplomats, officials, and civil servants (Institutul Diplomatic Roman 2012; Romanian Agency for Development and International Cooperation 2019b).

In 2022, Moldova received EU-candidate status and almost all the EU Member States have started to provide training for Moldovans responsible for the accession process, including Estonia, Lithuania, Sweden, Cyprus, and Austria (Interview #2 2023). Through IDR, the Romanian MFA joined this common effort and in October 2022 launched a training course tailored for Moldovan diplomats and public servants responsible for the EU accession process. The one-week event took place in Bucharest and the picturesque city of Brasov and proposed a rich curriculum on negotiation techniques and preparatory steps for effective interaction between Brussels officials and the Moldovans ones. Among the trainers were the chief negotiators of the Romanian EU

accession process, Mr. Vasile Pușcaș and Mr. Leonard Orban, former adviser to the President on EU matters, both offering insightful and technical details to the 25 participants from the Republic of Moldova (Institutul Diplomatic Roman 2022)

The training course organized by IDR in October 2022 was highly acclaimed by the participants, both formally and informally (Interview #2 2023). According to the participant's feedback, the training course received a score of 95% on the general level of satisfaction regarding the content, services, location, and social interactions. (Constantinescu 2022). Likewise, inside the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and European Integration of the Republic of Moldova, training courses offered by the Romanian MFA/IDR are a top choice (second place after Clingendael Institute of the Netherlands) among Moldovan diplomats (Interview #2 2023).

Moreover, there are two major aspects to be highlighted. First, in terms of take-home lessons, participants recognized that the training course was extremely helpful to understand both the accession process procedures as well as the post-accession preparatory steps. For the accession process, some of the respondents have pointed out the importance of inter-institutional cooperation in Moldova, the EU-level network of contacts, the consolidation of a pro-European domestic public opinion, and the necessity to establish "European accession bureaus" in each Moldovan institution to facilitate the external communication (Constantinescu 2022). For the post-accession period, participants have emphasized the essentiality of sustainable institutions, professionalized staff, and proper internal and external collaboration (Constantinescu 2022).

Secondly, in terms of follow-up actions after the training course organized by IDR, participants highlighted the dissemination of content and networking activities. Among the participants were the leading coordinator of the Moldovan accession process and a top-Government official, both expressing their clear intention to 1) inform the Moldovan Minister of

Foreign Affairs about the expertise gained during the course and 2) to directly contribute to the upcoming Government Decision that will establish the legal framework of the accession process (Constantinescu 2022). Regarding the networking side of the training course, participants affirmed that they will contact Romanian officials from Brussels to obtain support and direct access to higher EU levels (Constantinescu 2022).

3.1.2 EEAS and the European Diplomatic Academy: An alternative?

Diplomatic training is present at the EU level and acts as a norm diffusion instrument of Europeanization as well. The leading Brussels-based institution responsible for diplomatic affairs is the European External Action Service (EEAS). Launched on January 1st, 2011, EEAS is directly rooted in the 2007 Treaty of Lisbon and acts as a link between the EU and the Member States at the common foreign policy level. Staffed by national diplomats and personnel, as well as officials from the EU Commission and the General Secretariat of the Council, EEAS is the main assistance tool of the EU High Representative and is responsible for keeping contact with EU Delegations and other institutions (European Commission 2021). EEAS assures steering of EU foreign policy and provides continuous training facilities to its staff and Member States diplomats (Interview #5 2023). To fulfill its mission of enhancing the *esprit de corps* among the Member States in foreign affairs issues, in 2022 EEAS became the manager of the European Diplomatic Academy (EUDA).

The European Diplomatic Academy was established as a pilot program in August 2022 with the clear goal of creating a fully fledge academy (European External Action Service 2022). Financed through the European Parliament budget, the first edition of the European Diplomatic Academy gathered 40 diplomats from EU Institutions, Member States, and partner countries (European External Action Service 2022). EUDA was created to enhance the knowledge and skills of young diplomats and to set the foundation for the future cohort of decision-makers (Interview

#5 2023). College of Europe was selected to craft and implement a practice-oriented curriculum structured on ten major thematic areas on different aspects of EU foreign affairs policy (Interview #5 2023). Upon graduation from the EUDA, all participants are expected to become full-operational in terms of European affairs and ready to take up positions in Permanent Representations, EU Delegations, or national MFAs' specialized departments (Interview #5 2023).

In terms of training, EUDA has a bunch of unique characteristics. Firstly, it was designed to complement the national diplomatic training system and to equip the participants with drafting, negotiation, and communication skills on various EU topics (Interview #5 2023). Secondly, it is conducted in a residential mode at the College of Europe campus in Bruges, enabling the creation of an *esprit de corps* and facilitating post-project communication among participants (Interview #4 2023). Thirdly, it signals a deep political statement, since EUDA has accepted participants from non-EU countries (Georgia, Moldova Ukraine, Montenegro, Albania, and North Macedonia) and the first edition of EUDA was kicked off with a visit to the Polish – Ukrainian border (Interview #5 2023). Fourthly, participants are permanently engaging with top EU and global officials, scholars, and politicians and are weekly involved in study visits to Brussels-based international organizations (Interview #5 2023). In short, as one of the interviews declared for this research "EUDA taught me to perform my tasks with EU interests in mind without neglecting the national ones" (Interview #4 2023).

However, EUDA is far from being fully effective in terms of propelling Europeanization. While at the Member States level EEAS does an excellent job of training the next cohort of European diplomats, it missed the chance to have an input on EU presence in the neighborhood. For the 2023/24 edition of EUDA, non-EU participants are not eligible anymore. This represents an important setback for the EUDA mission to support EEAS activities outside the EU and offers

a negative signal to prospective Member States and partner countries. This decision was based on security and pragmatic reasons. Non-EU diplomats have restricted access to sensitive information, which dramatically affects their experience during EUDA (Interview #4 2023). On the pragmatic side, third countries nationals are not allowed to become EU employees, which restrains EUDA's fundamental goal to train prospective European Union officials (Interview #4 2023). But EUDA is not a singular case within the EEAS since there are no training opportunities per se at the External Action Service level for non-EU diplomats (Interview #5 2023).

3.1.3 Romania – coaching and lobbying Moldova's EU accession process

The expert-based knowledge transfer of Romania is going beyond traditional diplomatic training. In 2006, one year before its official accession to the EU, Romania and Moldova signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) at the foreign ministry level (Ministerul Afacerilor Externe si Integrarii Europene 2006). This document has set the premises for a bilateral joint action on mutual assistance in terms of regional cooperation and European integration. In practice, the MoU offered the legal framework for future working and thematic groups as well as established an increased frequency of bilateral consultations (Ministerul Afacerilor Externe si Integrarii Europene 2006). Moreover, as a direct consequence of the MoU, Moldova has initiated the procedures to create a national Diplomatic Institute following and making direct references to Romania as a model of good practices (Guvernul Republicii Moldova 2018).

Moldova is considering Romania as a key partner in its EU accession process. Following the diplomatic training activities, different types of bilateral cooperation between different institutional levels were created (Constantinescu 2022). For instance, many participants remained in direct contact with Mr. Vasile Pușcaș, chief negotiator of Romanian accession to the EU (Constantinescu 2022). But, the relevance of such training courses resides in their follow-ups.

Firstly, Romanian MFA has received several requests from Moldovan counterparts to extend the number and areas of training (Constantinescu 2022). Secondly, Romania directly assisted Moldova to organize the 2023 European Political Community Summit – EPC (Interview #2 2023). This event was the most important political reunion for Moldova since 1991, with over 40 heads of state and governments across Europe attending the Mimi Castle talks and conferences (EPCSummit23MD 2023). During the two-day events of the EPC, and before, Romanian Security Services, National Romanian Broadcaster, as well as other Romanian agencies offered technical assistance to Moldova (EPCSummit23MD 2023).

Romanian diplomacy acts as a mentor for Moldova in sensitive areas too. The Moldovan Government is trying assiduously to close the Transnistria chapter before 2030. As part of its agreements with the EU officials, Moldova has to clarify with the auto-proclaimed Republic of Transnistria the status of the territory situated on the left bank of the Dniester River. In this fragile context, Romanian officials and diplomats are perceived as trusted advisors and the only EU entity able to fully comprehend the complexity of Moldovan – Transnistria negotiations (Interview #1 2023). Romania was actively involved in the negotiation between both parties since 1991 and has the credentials to guide Moldova's efforts through specialized training and an increased involvement of Bucharest in CBMs (Confidence-Building Measures) (Interview #1 2023). Likewise, Moldova is about to release its national strategy on regional reintegration with Transnistria, and Romania is expected to provide its input through suggestions and extensive feedback (Interview #1 2023).

Regarding international support for integration, Moldova has benefited from a wide range of lobbying activities performed by the Romanian foreign policy at the EU level. Firstly, Romanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs was constantly on the frontline of the Member States that encouraged

the EU to offer Moldova the candidate state status (European Council 2023; Ministerul Afacerilor Externe 2023; 2023). Likewise, Romanian diplomacy was among the voices that acclaimed the decision of the European Political Community to organize the second summit in Chisinau, Moldova (Administratia Prezidentiala a Romaniei 2023). One of the most important Romanian-led initiatives towards Moldova was the creation of the Moldova Support Platform (France Ministry of European and Foreign Affairs 2022). Along with France and Germany, Romanian diplomacy has established the Platform to raise awareness and funds to mitigate the effects of the Russian full-scale invasion of Ukraine on Moldova's economic and energy sector.

There is an extensive history of Romanian lobbying activities for Moldova's European path. In 2010, Romania and Moldova signed a Strategic Partnership aimed to enhance multi-level cooperation between parties to advance Moldova's expertise in different EU-related standards, from trade and education to border management and agriculture (Centrul Roman de Politica Externa 2021). The Partnership set the premises for further developments such as the Romanian contribution to the signing of the Association Agreement between the European Union and the Republic of Moldova in 2014 (Ministerul Afacerilor Externe 2014). Additionally, Romania serves as the main pillar of Moldova's strategy to substitute OSCE with the EU in the "5+2" format for the Transnistria dossier (Interview #1 2023).

Regarding Transnistria and the Autonomous Territorial Unit of Gagauzia, Romania is a focal point of Moldova's strategy to Europeanize the problematic regions. Moldova strengthened relations with the European Union, which determined Chisinau to adjust its approach to engage more extensively with Transnistria. After the outbreak of a large-scale war in Ukraine, the self-proclaimed government from Tiraspol become more dependent on European Union, Romania is the principal trade partner of one of the major investors in Transnistria (Interview #1 2023;

Interview #6 2023). Moreover, Moldova co-opted Romanian foreign policy decision-makers to assist its efforts to add Transnistrian representatives in different EU-accession working groups (Interview #1 2023). Regarding Gagauzia, a pro-Russian-led autonomous region in Southern Moldova, Romania assisted local authorities in agriculture and education-related topics (Interview #6 2023).

The support provided by Romania converted Moldova into an agent of Europeanization. "Moldova has started to adopt a soft power strategy towards Transnistria, our government realized that it is better to attract Tiraspol rather than enact a blockade against the separatist regime. It's important for us to show them the benefits of being part of Europe. They [separatist political figures] can easily see the infrastructure differences between EU-funded roads close to the Transnistrian border" (Interview #6 2023). In this regard, Moldovan Government has militated to extend the Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Agreement (DCFTA) over the left bank of Dniester (Interview #6 2023). Moldovan authorities were fully aware that by adding Transnistria to the trade agreement with the European Union it means that Tiraspol has to comply with EU standards and regulations (Interview #6 2023). Putting Transnistria on the European path would facilitate further reintegration processes between Chisinau and Tiraspol as well as the full Moldovan EU-accession process per se (Interview #6 2023).

3.2 Findings

Through its foreign policy, Romania has managed to overcome internal shortcomings and to make the transition from a net downloader to an agent of Europeanization. Using a proactive approach both at the bilateral and regional level, Romanian diplomats and decision-makers started to upload their preferences in Brussels by raising constantly awareness on the importance of

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dynamizing the process of Europeanization in countries like Moldova. Taking advantage of the complicated security dynamics in the Eastern Neighborhood after the Russian full-scale invasion of Ukraine, Romania managed to affirm itself on the international stage as a provider of expertise in topics related to the Republic of Moldova. Moreover, its assistance to Moldova transformed Romania into uncontested proxy player in advancing Chisinau's European path regardless of the political nature and the ideology of Moldovan incumbents over the years. To a certain extent, Romania is going beyond the sovereigntist rhetoric expressed by other Member States, by aligning itself with the pro-enlargement group, thus becoming a unique norm entrepreneur for Moldova's interests in the EU.

Additionally, through its diplomatic training scheme provided to Moldova, Romania became a relevant hub of Europeanization. Since the 1990s, Romania paid attention to its neighbor and offered a wide range of training opportunities for young diplomats, sharing its expertise with Moldova long before acquiring the EU membership. The Romanian Diplomatic Institute has hosted numerous cohorts of Moldovan diplomats and public servants, thus contributing directly to their professionalization and adaptation of Moldova to European norms and regulations. Diplomatic training laid the foundations for various follow-up joint ventures, such as bilateral Romanian-Moldova working groups that were established at all policy levels and in all policy sectors, from agriculture and border management to technical and security support during major events such as the European Political Community Summit hosted by Chisinau. Moreover, diplomatic training serves as an important source of personal contacts, with many Moldovan diplomats affirming that they will require the expertise of Romanian counterparts when drafting internal legislation or when needing smooth access in different Brussels-based institutions.

Romanian diplomacy and diplomatic training serve as complementary tools for Moldova's European path. Given its mission as manager of EU's foreign policy apparatus, the European External Action Service offered training facilities for Moldovan diplomats to a certain extent. During the first edition of the European Diplomatic Academy, diplomats from non-EU states (including the Republic of Moldova) were exposed to the "Brussels bubble" by attending a rich pallet of events. Participants were exposed to the main EU areas of action and were engaged in comprehensive discussions with top European scholars, professionals, and political figures. The most valuable asset during the EUDA was the network of young diplomats created to strengthen transnational and transregional relations for the upcoming decades. However, it should be mentioned that the European Union, in general, and its External Action Service, in particular, are limited in terms of providing an effective arena for sustainable engagement among EU and non-EU diplomats.

Therefore, Romania is acting as a complementary norm entrepreneur to complete EU's effort to Europeanize countries from the Eastern Neighborhood. In this regard, Romanian foreign policy has developed two dimensions of action to assist Moldova's Europeanization process. First, as a coach, Romania is offering an expertise-based knowledge transfer through diplomatic courses and other education facilities offered to their Moldovan counterparts. What is even more interesting is that the coaching dimension implies a considerable mentoring approach. In short, after the knowledge transfer happens, Romania performs the role of a trusted advisor by offering a variety of follow-up guidance and assistance activities to Moldova for implementing the acquired information and skills. Thus, a useful example is the 2023 European Political Community Summit hosted by Chisinau where Romania doubled its knowledge transfer by guiding the local authorities in security, protocol and IT&C-related aspects.

The second dimension emphasizes Romania as a lobbyist for Moldova at the EU level. Taking proactive positions in summits and publicly supporting the EU-accession process of Moldova transformed Romania into an agent of Europeanization able to upload its preferences in Brussels and become a renowned depository of expertise on Moldova among the Member States. Through its lobbying activities, Romania managed to raise awareness of the necessity of Moldova to be granted EU candidate status and to initiate fundraising bodies such as the Moldova Support Platform.

3.3 Contributions of the thesis to the literature

3.3.1 Theoretical contributions

Diplomacy may be conceptualized as a key element of the democratization theoretical framework. In the broad discussion on the connection between exogenous and endogenous factors, diplomacy acts as a bridge between the external democratizing pressure (linkage and leverage) and internal organizational power. Even in totalitarian regimes, diplomacy as an agency remains open to international channels and is able to transport discreetly democratic values internally. Moreover, diplomacy remains to a certain degree out of the ideological battle within authoritarian regimes. For instance, during the Cold War, many Eastern Europe diplomats remained in permanent contact with the Western states and channeled views and behaviors domestically. This approach was extended after the fall of Communism in 1989 when Eastern European diplomats were engaged in extensive diplomatic training schemes in liberal countries. For instance, top officials in the Romanian MFA were trained in French institutions to prepare for negotiating Romania's EU accession. Therefore, it may be argued that diplomacy is performing the role of a free agent in the

democratization process and should be analyzed more thoroughly as a mechanism and agent for diffusion.

Additionally, diplomacy and diplomatic training explain several gaps in the literature on Europeanization. According to Börzel and Risse's theoretical framework, the Europeanization process is mostly done within the EU, while little attention was paid to the role of the Member States in norm diffusion (Börzel and Risse 2000; 2003; 2009; 2017). In this regard, diplomacy and diplomatic training shed a different light on the role of the Member States as agents of Europeanization. Romanian diplomacy towards the Republic of Moldova shows that Member States are not necessarily simple downloaders of norms, but that they could complement the Europeanization process when the EU is performing under standards.

Moreover, there are extra mechanisms that could assist the transfer of norms outside Börzel & Risse's approach. While it can be argued that the case of Romanian diplomacy as a tool of norm diffusion is fitting the "socialization", "lessons drawing", and "emulation through mimicry" mechanisms, the empirical evidence shows that 1) Romania is not using assertive/conditionality-based approaches in the socialization process with Moldova since Bucharest continues to act seemingly independent of Moldovan incumbents' ideological affiliation, 2) Romania is constantly doubling the "lesson-drawing" by mentorship endeavors in Moldova and 3) the complex security context (see Transnistria, Gagauzia, etc.) does not allow a full mimicry of Romanian EU-accession experience. Therefore, diffusion through diplomacy transcends socialization, lesson-drawing, and mimicry mechanisms, and could be assessed as a distinct mechanism of diffusion.

Likewise, the theoretical framework on agents of Europeanization is poorly developed, since is strictly focused on cases where there is at least one EU/Member State involved. The empirical evidence presented in this thesis shows that Romania as a two-way norm entrepreneur

(coaching & lobbying) since it offers Moldova the toolbox and credentials to act itself as an agent of Europeanization in relation to Transnistria. As a coach, Romania equipped Moldova with knowledge and guidance to acquire European norms and regulations that were used subsequently by Chisinau to attract Transnistria closer to territorial reintegration under the EU umbrella. As a lobbyist, Romania granted Moldova the necessary credentials to access different levels of influence. Chisinau used Romanian EU status to further involve Transnistria in different working groups with Brussels. Therefore, it could be argued that Europeanization may occur by nested diffusion in a vertical chain: EU-Romania-Moldova-Transnistria.

3.3.2 Empirical and policy contributions

This research stresses the importance of diplomatic training as a channel of direct and effective knowledge transfer for EU-accession states. Firstly, it provides insights into the required set of skills that should be developed to make diplomats full-operational in the context of negotiations between candidate states and EU institutions. In this regard, the interviews and questionnaire responders have pointed out the need for comprehensive diplomatic training programs on negotiation techniques, crisis management, and strategic communication. Secondly, this research extends the understanding of diplomatic academies from simply specialized education agencies to genuine hubs of Europeanization. Romanian Diplomatic Institute and its EEAS counterpart were perceived by their participants as essential sources of inspiration and networking. Therefore, the classes per se are just the tangible aspects of such academies, since complex follow-up interactions and activities later take place as a direct consequence of the diplomatic training.

The most important policy contribution of this thesis is that, based on the data collected during this research, a policy paper with a set of recommendations will be handed to Romanian

Diplomatic Institute leadership since the author of this thesis is a foreign policy expert affiliated with the IDR. The goal is to seize the unique momentum and Moldova's accession process to the EU and to expand the set of programs provided to diplomats directly involved in negotiations with Brussels. A key recommendation would be that 1) Romanian Diplomatic Institute needs to be more involved in socialization activities with EEAS and other EU counterparts to better coordinate their efforts in supporting the effective preparation of Moldovan staff involved in the EU accession process, 2) Romania has to design tailored training programs for each negotiation chapter of the acquis, and 3) there is a clear need expressed by Moldovan representatives interviewed during this research to receive training for post-accession scenarios, especially on how to deal with an Euro-sceptic public opinion.

Conclusions

Europeanization emerged as a subdivision of democratization, especially tailored for the European Union's behavior in relation to different institutions of the Member States and third countries. Steadily, the Europeanization process acquired new mechanisms of norm diffusion, varying from punitive ones (sanctions, conditionalities) to more inspirational tools (socialization, emulation). However, there are certain activities that transcend those typologies of diffusion. Diplomacy and diplomatic training embed unfamiliar qualities for traditional theories of both democratization and Europeanization by offering a model of norm diffusion that does not imply neither a "stick and carrot" approach, nor manipulation and mimicry (See Börzel & Risse dedicated section). In the context of Europeanization, it seems that diplomacy and diplomatic training are performing a more complex role, which involves an expertise-based knowledge transfer with follow-up guidance and lobbying activities in favor of a prospective EU member.

To gain an improved perspective on the diffusion mechanism, this research documents empirically the transition of Romania from a net downloader of norms to an agent of Europeanization that acts as a norm entrepreneur beyond EU borders. The thesis concludes that Romania is a deviant case in the Europeanization process since 1) new Member States are expected to remain downloaders of EU norms for a longer period, 2) Romania is an agent of Europeanization outside the EU, 3) Romanian foreign policy is a complementary (not an alternative) instrument to EU's efforts to export Europeanization in Moldova, and 4) Romania transfers knowledge and offers guidance and lobbying support to Moldova without imposing its own conditionalities, at least not in an official manner.

As an agent of Europeanization in Moldova, Romania acts as a bi-dimensional norm entrepreneur. First, it acts as a Europeanization coach for Moldova through its diplomacy and

diplomatic training, since the Romanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs has long provided knowledge transfer programs to Moldova, as well as mentoring and guidance to assist Moldova in implementing the European *acquis*. Secondly, it acts as a Europeanization lobbyist since Romanian diplomacy is an uploader of national preferences to the EU level and has become a renowned expert inside the EU community on Moldova. The results of this thesis show that Moldova responded actively to Romania's norm entrepreneurship by developing its own norm diffusion toolbox, especially in regard to Transnistria. Therefore, a nested diffusion of European norms seems to be developing, which expands the concept of Europeanization because it shows a direct vertical transfer of norms from Brussels to the self-proclaimed government from Tiraspol, via Bucharest and Chișinău.

However, this thesis has certain theoretical and empirical limits. First, in terms of data collection, this thesis used mainly documents in the public domain produced by the Romanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs in assessing Moldova's diplomacy reaction to the norm entrepreneurship side of Romanian diplomats. Even though interviews with Moldovan diplomats provided insights on Romanian strategy, additional interview with Bucharest diplomats would improve the understanding on to what extent and how Romanian diplomats conceive theirs roles as agents of Europeanization. Secondly, the data collected for this research on the Moldovan side (six interviews & 19 questionnaires) may involve certain concerns regarding the representativity of the sample. Third, Romania-Moldova relations are unique in the EU framework, comprising many aspects ranging from common administrative agencies in the early 1900s to recent substantial cultural, economic, and educational interactions. As a result, many facets of this complex and long-lasting relationship were left unexplored by this thesis, due to its exclusive focus on the diplomatic exchanges.

When it comes to the future research agenda, Europeanization remains an appealing subject with multiple research opportunities. First, the theoretical model presented in this thesis raises the question of how far the proposed model of norm diffusion may be applied to countries such as Ukraine and Georgia, both of which are tied to a number of EU Member States, with Ukraine recently being granted candidate status. Second, this thesis argued that national diplomacy and diplomatic training are complementary to the EU's efforts to export norms, and thus the limits and strengths of this relationship between the EU and Member States' efforts to export Europeanization beyond EU borders should be thoroughly investigated. Third, this thesis advanced the concept of nested diffusion as an alternative mechanism of norm diffusion, which could pave the way for the development of an entire research agenda on how nested diffusion works outside of the EU, as well as the dimensions, characteristics, and instruments of this novel type of diffusion.

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Interview #3. 2023. Interview #3 Diplomat, participant European Diplomatic Academy, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and European Integration of the Republic of MoldovaTelephone. available on demand.

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