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Strategy, Identity or Legitimacy?

Analysing Engagement with Dual Citizenship from the Bottom-Up

Eleanor Knott

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Abstract

Why do individuals become dual citizens by acquiring kin-state citizenship? This article examines the case of Moldova as an extreme case of kin-state dual citizenship acquisition. In Moldova, a majority of residents can acquire (or reacquire) Romanian citizenship by virtue of being descended from former Romania citizens. First, the article moves beyond institutional and migration-centred perspectives on dual citizenship acquisition. Instead, the article explores kin-state citizenship as a practice of citizenship acquisition. The article uses 55 interviews with ordinary people, conducted in Moldova between 2012 and 2013, to examine why individuals choose (or not) to acquire kin-state citizenship. Second, the article argues for understanding explanations of acquisition of kin-state citizenship beyond strategic vs identity explanations. Rather, the article considers a third dimension of legitimacy. This legitimacy dimension demonstrates how acquisition of kin-state citizenship is constructed as natural, normal and, thus, legitimate. The article finds that the legitimate dimension is used even by those who do not identify co-ethnically or with the kin-state. Ties of legitimacy can, therefore, bind individuals to the kin-state via citizenship, irrespective of whether they identify with the kin-state.

Keywords: citizenship, Romania, Moldova, restitution, bottom-up, dual citizenship, kin-state

Introduction

Why do individuals become dual citizens by acquiring citizenship from states that claim them as co-ethnic (kin-states)? The existing literature focuses on empirical questions of how and why states have (or not) opened up possibilities to migrants to acquire dual citizenship in state of residence (Howard, 2005; Sejersen, 2008), of how and why kin-states have opened up opportunities for kin communities to acquire kin-state citizenship while residing externally (Kovács, 2006; Pogonyi, 2011; Waterbury, 2014), and normative questions of how and why migrants should have the rights to dual citizenship (Spiro, 2010). These state-centred and normative approaches overlook why and how individuals engage with dual citizenship provided by kin-states, (Harpaz, 2015). In other words, scholars have typically overlooked the practice of dual citizenship acquisition.

Among those who do examine the practice of dual citizenship, and motivations to acquire dual citizenship from kin-states, scholars emphasise either identity (Vasiljević, 2014), or strategic factors (Heintz, 2008; Harpaz, 2015). For example, in the case of acquisition of Romanian citizenship in Moldova, and the case of this article, Heintz (2008) downplays the role of identity. She argues that individuals do not acquire Romanian citizenship because they identify as Romanian or with Romania, but because of strategic reasons, such as access to EU travel and work rights. By contrast Vasiljević (2014), examining the acquisition of dual citizenship from kin-states in the post-Yugoslav context, emphasises citizenship as something symbolic and an ‘identity-forming’ experience.

In sum, there is disagreement about the role of strategic versus identity factors in explaining why individuals seek dual citizenship from kin-state. First, this debate overlooks how strategic and identity explanations might work in tandem. For example, the strategic value of kin-state dual citizenship might be more significant to those who already identify with the kin-state. Second, this strategic-identity debate overlooks other dimensions which might explain acquisition. In particular, it overlooks how dual citizenship might be considered normal, natural and rightful for external kin communities. In this article, I frame this third dimension as a legitimate dimension.

To examine these dimensions—strategic, identity and legitimate—and the interaction between the dimensions, this article focuses on the reacquisition of Romanian citizenship by those residing in Moldova. First, this case offers theoretical leverage because the majority of Moldovan citizens are eligible for Romanian citizenship. Reacquiring Romanian citizenship is also popular in Moldova. Second, most individuals who reacquire Romanian citizenship do so within Moldova (Harpaz, 2015). Third, Moldova provides a useful context to address the concept of strategic citizenship because Moldovan citizenship provides few global opportunities. Meanwhile, Romanian citizenship provides greater global access and opportunities, notably within the EU. Romanian citizenship. Thus, Romanian citizenship has a high instrumental value for Moldovans.

Overall, the article does not find strategic explanations to be most significant. Rather, the article argues that the popularity of Romanian citizenship is explained by how it is framed as something as ‘natural’ and ‘normal’ in Moldova, and thus legitimate. This legitimate dimension is significant for explaining how individuals might frame Romanian citizenship in Moldova as a right to be recovered, irrespective of the strategic value or identity-bearing role of Romanian citizenship. In other words, Romanian citizenship was conceived as a normal right for those in Moldova regardless of whether individuals identified with Romania, as a kin-state, or as Romanian.

From Singular to Dual Citizenship

Citizenship binds together individuals and the state. It is a vital democratic (and democratizing) institution, providing access to political and social rights and formalizing the basis on which individuals have reciprocal obligations to the state (Isin and Turner, 2007: 16; Marshall, 1950, 1998; Turner, 1997). Until the late twentieth century, citizenship was conceived as a singular relation between individuals and the state. The Hague Convention (1930) established an international

principle of ‘one nationality only’. Dual citizenship was pathologised as a form of ‘bigamy’. Dual citizens conceived as potential sources of subversion, particularly within the spectre of the Cold War (Spiro, 1997).

More recently, with increasing migration flows and a shift towards more inclusive norms, states have desecuritized and opened up opportunities dual citizenship (Harpaz and Mateos, Forthcoming). Individuals with dual and/or multiple citizenship ties are no longer a threat to the state (Pogonyi, 2011; Spiro, 2010). As empirical studies show, the road to the expansion of dual citizenship has been slow. Migrant-sending states such as Turkey (see Kaya, 2012), realized dual citizenship was necessary to allow emigrants to keep home-state citizenship rather than forcing emigrants to renounce citizenship (Benhabib et al., 2007: 1; Benhabib, 2005: 1; see also Kastoryano, 2005). Migrant-receiving states slowly allowed long-term immigrants to naturalize. At the same time, many states continue to restrict dual citizenship. These include states: with large diaspora (e.g. China, see (Yen-Fen and Wu, 2011; Low, 2016)), contentious relations with nearby states (e.g. India vis-à-vis Pakistan, see (Dickinson and Bailey, 2007)) and large minority populations (e.g. Slovakia, Ukraine, Estonia, Latvia, (Shevel, 2009)). In the case of India, dual citizenship is permitted for global diaspora but not for individuals residing in Pakistan and Bangladesh, among others (Dickinson and Bailey, 2007; Harpaz and Mateos, Forthcoming). Moldova, the focus of this paper, has permitted dual citizenship since 2002.

Dual Citizenship as a Kin-State Policy

This expansion, and growing acceptance, of dual citizenship is theorised as evidence of cosmopolitanism. For example, through dual citizenship, states are becoming more inclusive and accepting of diverse multicultural societies. In turn, membership rights have become multiplied and fluid, leading to citizenship constellations across state borders (Stasiulis and Ross, 2006; Bauböck, 2010), and a post-national norm of citizenship (Soysal, 1994; Tambini, 2001). This expansion of dual citizenship for immigrants and emigrants is associated with regional flows of immigration, for example to the ‘old’ EU member-states and North America (Howard, 2005).

Questions of dual citizenship outside of western Europe concern more the expansion of citizenship to external co-ethnic kin, whether in east and south east Asia (Brubaker and Kim, 2011; Ong, 1999), Latin America (Tintori, 2011), or central and eastern Europe (Neofotistos, 2009; Vasiljević, 2014; Waterbury, 2014; Dzankic, 2012). As Kovács (2006: 433) argues, questions of dual citizenship in central and eastern Europe ‘touch upon sensitive issues of state sovereignty and evoke problems of historically disputed borders and trans-border ethnic-kin minorities’, by demonstrating the enduring tensions of who belongs to these states.

With the growing acceptance of dual citizenship, kin-states in Central and Eastern Europe have adopted these policies without adopting the same ‘transnational, post-national or cosmopolitan’ norms of inclusion (Pogonyi, 2011: 685). Rather, kin-states use dual citizenship as a policy of extra-territorial nation-building by expanding the citizenry to non-resident individuals the kin-

state considers to be co-ethnic. Domestically, kin-states use dual citizenship to pursue populist policies of nation-building, as an electioneering strategy, to generate financial resources from wealthy external co-ethnic communities (e.g. in China). Externally, kin-states use dual citizenship policies to increase their influence in neighbouring states (Isin and Turner, 2007; Waterbury, 2014; Pogonyi, 2011). Dual citizenship, in the case of kin-states, is far from the post-national cosmopolitan ideal. Instead, kin-states are actively conducting ‘post-territorial’ nation-building strategies to maintain relations with, and increase influence over, with kin communities by extending citizenship to these communities (Ragazzi and Balalovska: 2).

At the same time, kin-states adopt framing strategies which obscure these nation-building aims. For example, separate to naturalisation policies for resident immigrants, Romania offers the right of citizenship reacquisition (*redobândire*). Eligibility is for those who reside in territories that were annexed from Greater Romania to the Soviet Union in 1941 and can prove descendancy, up to the third generation, to interwar (1918-1941) Romanian citizens (Iordachi, 2010). Romania justifies this policy on the basis that these former citizens unwillingly lost Romanian citizenship when these territories were annexed by the Soviet Union. As Romania’s former president (2004-2014) Traian Băsescu argued: it was not Moldovans’ fault they ‘lost’ their Romanian citizenship; rather it was ‘Stalin who has decided’ for them (EurActiv, 2010). Romania does not offer a policy of naturalization ‘en masse’ (Iordachi, 2004). Individuals must apply themselves to reacquire Romanian citizenship, but do not have to prove Romanian ethnic/cultural identification or linguistic ability. As a result, Romania argues these rights to reacquire Romanian citizenship are not ethnically but territorially defined. Explicitly, then, Romania’s policy is territorial. The policy’s restorationist tone implies a more ethnicized undertone of Romanian citizenship (Waterbury, 2014: 37), even if Romania does its best to de-ethnicize the image of citizenship reacquisition.

Kin-State Dual Citizenship from the Bottom-Up

Analysis of kin-state dual citizenship is predominantly state-centred, top-down and institutional. Thus, such analysis focuses on the supply-side and legal basis of dual citizenship, and the impact of dual citizenship policies (Ronkainen, 2011). Less explored are the ‘contexts, meanings and practices that make citizenship possible’ (Nyers, 2007: 79; Isin and Turner, 2007: 16).

Citizenship practices have been analysed elsewhere, in anthropology, sociology and social psychology, from the perspective of informal and ‘everyday encounters’, in particular, in terms of debates around the relationship between multiculturalism and experiences of citizenship (Hopkins and Blackwood, 2011: 226). Some research has also begun to open up analysis of migration-centred dual citizenship acquisition. For example, Yanasmayan (2015: 787-788) uses a typology of thin vs thick citizenship. Yanasmayan (2015) considers how far dual citizenship is a thin utilitarian status ‘devoid of’ or tied to emotional bonds, as opposed to a thicker and more symbolic status, which ‘implies an emotional bond’ to citizenship (see also Ronkainen, 2011).

By contrast, research on the practice of kin-state citizenship policies is relatively under-

developed. Following migration-centred research, the debate remains between thicker identity-based explanations of dual citizenship practices against thinner strategic explanations of kin-state citizenship acquisition (see also Leuchter, 2014).¹ In her research on Moldova, Heintz adopts a thin understanding of Romanian citizenship and deliberately refutes the notion that Romanian citizenship might be a thicker identity-based status for individuals in Moldova. By contrast, in her research of Serbian citizenship among external ethnic Serb communities across the territory of Former Yugoslavia, Vasiljević (2014: 3, 10) emphasises the ‘identity-forming and recognition-bearing social role’ of citizenship.

This article offers a different perspective. First, it considers how kin-state citizenship acquisition can be both strategic and identity-based. In other words, the article argues that strategic or identity explanations should not necessarily be conceived as mutually exclusive logics. Second, the article argues for a third legitimate dimension, where kin-state citizenship is a rightful status for members of the kin community to hold. This legitimate dimension can be expressed instead, or alongside a combination, of strategic and identity explanations.

Romania’s Kin-State Citizenship Policy in Moldova

Moldova and Romania have a special relationship. Historically, Moldova was part of interwar Romania, and a part of the ancient principality of Moldova remains in Romania. Ethnically and culturally, there is a similarity (though controversy) between what it means to be Moldovan and Romanian. Moldovan censuses enumerate the ethnic categories of Romanian and Moldova separately, while Romania considers the categories to be coterminous. In other words, Romania considers Moldovans to be Romanians (Department for Romanians Abroad). Linguistically, the languages of Romanian and Moldovan are the same.² In previous research, I develop categories which problematize this all or nothing approach. Rather, I argue that there are different ways of identifying as Romanian and/or Moldovan, which demonstrate the nuances, contestation and even uncertainty of the question— “who are we? (cine suntem noi)?”—in Moldova (Knott, 2015a; Knott, 2015b). I discuss these categories below, as well as how I use these categories to structure the analysis of citizenship explanations.

As Harpaz (2015: 2091) shows, 97% of those becoming non-resident Romanian do so while resid-

¹The small amount of literature considering (re)acquisition of Romanian citizenship in Moldova makes the same argument, in terms of a strategic vs symbolic framing, and commonly emphasizes the strategic as opposed to the symbolic rationale of citizenship Heintz, M. (2008) State and Citizenship in Moldova: a Pragmatic Point of View. In: Heintz M (ed) Weak state, Uncertain citizenship: Moldova. Frankfurt am Main: P. Lang, 1-18, Suveica, S. (2013) ‘Entering the EU through the Back Door’?! Debates on Romanian Citizenship for Moldovans. *Eurolimes*, 16: 272–284.

²In Moldova’s 2014 census, 54.6% recorded Moldovan and 24% recorded Romanian (i.e. 78.4%) as the language most commonly spoken identified Moldova, N. B. o. S. o. t. R. o. (2014) *Caracteristici - Populație 1, Rezultatele Recensământului Populației și al Locuințelor 2014* (Characteristics - Population 1, Population and Housing Census in the Republic of Moldova, May 12-25, 2014). Linguistically, Romanian and Moldovan languages are interchangeable and mutually intelligible; the choice of name is more political Ciscel, M. H. (2006) A Separate Moldovan Language? *The Sociolinguistics of Moldova’s Limba de Stat. Nationalities Papers*, 34: 575-597.). More detail is offered below concerning dates over language and ethnic identification in Moldova, in particular, how these are categorised.

ing in Moldova, in comparison to just 0.7% from Ukraine and 1% from Israel. As such, Moldova is a critical case of non-resident citizenship reacquisition. It is useful to know more about why so many might seek Romanian citizenship, while neither residing nor planning to reside in Romania. Reacquiring Romanian citizenship in Moldova has been popular since Moldovan independence in 1991. While Romanian citizenship is predominantly uncontroversial today, holding dual and multiple citizenship was not permitted in Moldova until 2002 (Gasca, 2010; Monitorul Oficial al Republicii Moldova, 2002). Even then, the Communist government, in office 2001-2009, continued to prevent holders of dual citizenship from holding public office. Two figures in the opposition, Alexandru Tănase (constitutional court judge and oppositional politician) and Dorin Chirtoacă (Mayor of Chişinău, 2007-present), brought a case to the European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR). The ECtHR ruled in 2010 that it was restrictive on democracy to prevent dual citizens from holding office and Moldova was forced to revoke this policy (ECtHR, 2010). At the same time, Moldova experienced a pro-European political transition with the Communist government losing office in 2009. The interim president, Mihai Ghimpu (incidentally Chirtoacă's uncle), swiftly repealed restrictions on dual citizens holding public office, even before the ECtHR ruling. This signalled an increasingly political permissiveness to dual citizenship, and specifically towards holding Romanian citizenship, in Moldova.

Romania's policy of towards kin-state citizenship has received criticism from EU agencies (though not the EU Commission) and western European right-wing media because Romania is perceived to be facilitating policies that might lead to mass migration of Moldovans to EU member-states (Knott, 2017). Reacquiring Romanian citizenship has been a popular policy, although it remains unclear by how much. Romania has been (seemingly) unwilling to be transparent about how many have reacquired Romanian citizenship in Moldova, in particular, since 2009. For example, Romania has not declared its statistics of citizenship acquisition and reacquisition to Eurostat since then.³ Before 2009, Romanian statistics submitted to Eurostat indicate that (only) 11,993 Moldovans reacquired Romanian citizenship between 1998 and 2009 (Eurostat, 1998-2012). A Soros Romania report indicates reports a higher number, where 226,507 cases were 'solved' between 1991 and 2011 (Panainte and Nedelciuc, 2012). Records from Cetatenie.ro report similarly large numbers of ordin, records of those called to file their documents for citizenship reacquisition (Figure 1).

Romanian citizenship has a high potential value for Moldovan citizens. It opens up rights to legally travel and work abroad, especially in the UK, that Moldovan citizenship could not offer (Figure 2). Before EU visa liberalisation for Moldovan citizens in April 2014, the visa-free travel rights provided by Moldovan citizenship were minimal. For example, Romania's accession to the EU in 2007 required Moldovan citizens to apply for a Romanian visa; previously, Moldovan citizens had been able to travel to Romania without a passport. At the same time, following accession, Romanian citizenship granted access to EU citizenship, and the equal and commensurate rights and benefits of this status. As Waterbury (2009: 156) argues, applications for reacquisition 'rose

³Personal correspondence with Romania's National Citizenship Authority (*Autorităţii Naţionale pentru Cetăţenie*, ANC) revealed that the agency does not collect citizenship acquisition and reacquisition data by country of origin, even though Romania is required by Eurostat to do so.

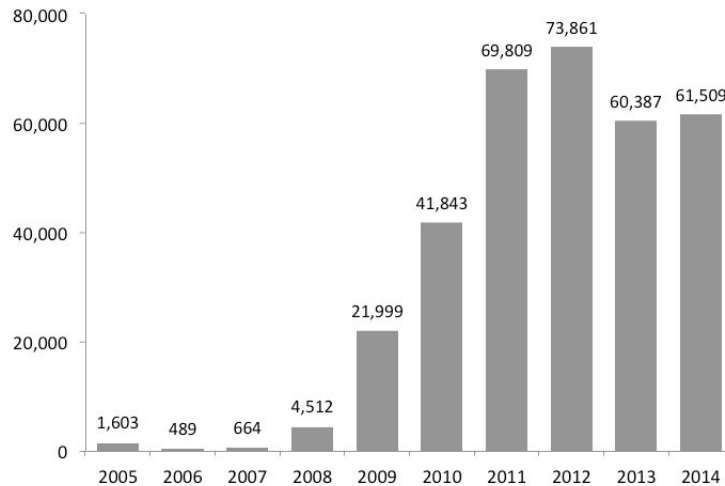


Figure 1: 1 Number of Applications Processed by ANC (Article 11, 2005-2014)

Note: no data is available on whether these were positively or negatively processed, i.e. whether applicants were accepted or denied citizenship; Source: www.cetatenie.ro

dramatically' in line with Romania's ever-successful track towards EU accession, where Romanian citizenship became an 'instrumental' way 'of improving life chances'.

Access to Romanian citizenship therefore had, and continues to have, a high strategic value in terms of the rights and benefits that can be attained, within the EU and globally, to substitute for the weak comparative power of Moldovan citizenship. This value is emphasised in existing analyses of Romanian citizenship, with scholars arguing that reacquisition of Romanian citizenship is explained just by strategic, rather than symbolic, reasons because of the opportunities offered by Romanian citizenship via its attachment to EU rights (Heintz, 2008; Suveica, 2013; Iordachi, 2004; Waterbury, 2009). This existing research is based on assumptions about the strategic value of Romanian citizenship in Moldova and lacks examination of the practice of Romanian citizenship reacquisition from the bottom-up.

Methodology: Studying Dual Citizenship from the Bottom-Up

By examining the practice of Romanian citizenship reacquisition, this article analyses the 'lay' categories of 'everyday social experience' to ask how and why individuals engage with Romanian citizenship in Moldova (Brubaker and Cooper, 2000: 4). It focuses on the everyday 'categories of practice' as opposed to top-down 'categories of analysis' to understand how people 'enact (and ignore and deflect)' and give meaning to citizenship practices 'in the varied contexts of their everyday lives' (Fox and Miller-Idriss, 2008: 537; Brubaker et al., 2006).

Following the practice-oriented approach, I focused on collecting 'experience-near'/emic understandings of identities, institutions and concepts rather than top-down or experience-far concepts

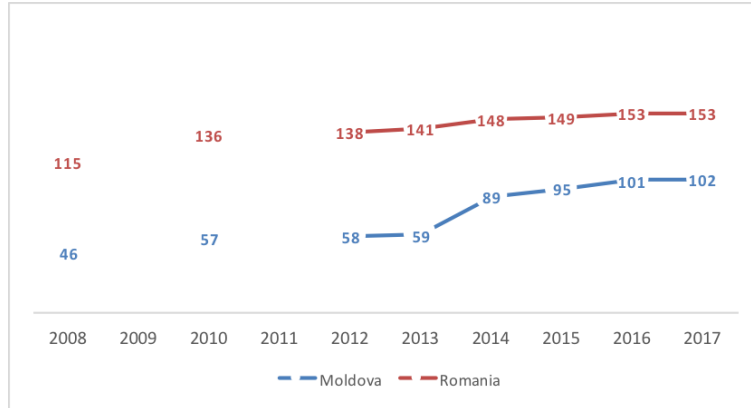


Figure 2: Visa Restriction Index (Rank)

Source: Henley Partners 2016, visaindex.com; NB: the lower the rank, the more powerful the passport in terms of visa-free access to other states

(Schwartz-Shea and Yanow, 2012; Geertz, 1975). I was interested both in how participants identified, the meanings they ascribed to these forms of identification, and how participants engaged with (or not) Romanian citizenship reacquisition as a practice. This included participants' experiences of these practices and the reasoning participants gave for their engagement or lack of engagement. To some extent, this article is limited by the fact that it relies on individuals self-reporting their explanations, and being able to articulate these explanations. At the same time, this article is based on the stories people tell about the meanings of identification and citizenship practices. These stories, meanings and practices, as discussed above, are a vital dimension of understanding citizenship as something more than a political/legal institution, but as something that is experienced in consequential ways at the level of the everyday.

In terms of data, I conducted 55 semi-structured interviews between 2012 and 2013 in Chişinău, the capital of Moldova, in Romanian and English (see Appendix). About two thirds of participants were male ($n=38$); one third were female ($n=17$). Most participants were in their 20s ($n=36$) or 30s ($n=11$), with a few in their 40s ($n=6$) or 50s ($n=2$). In selecting participants, as a small- n sample, I was not aiming for a representative sample or to make claims of representativeness (Small, 2009). Instead, I aim for an in-depth study which examines a broad range of participants, for example, across the political spectrum, by seeking participants from across the youth wings of Moldova's political parties, to explore 'multiple perspectives' and 'contradictory narratives' (Schwartz-Shea and Yanow, 2012: 51). As a small- n study, the article is also restricted in considering primarily Moldova's post-Soviet generation. Practically, these participants were easier to contact, either via organisational networks or through existing participants, and to build rapport with. Theoretically too, these participants are interesting for experiencing similar socialization, vis-à-vis each other, in contrast to the Soviet generation (i.e. participants' parents).

Critically, I analyse only participants who identified as Romanian and/or Moldovan. Those who identify as ethnically Ukrainian or Russian, could also be eligible for Romanian citizenship if they

could prove descendancy (up to the third generation) from citizens of interwar Greater Romania. These individuals, however, fall outside this paper because I am concerned only with individuals that Romania consider to be co-ethnic. At the same time, I do not conceive that individuals do or should necessarily identify with the mutually exclusive ethnic census categories of Romanian or Moldovan. Rather, in line the bottom-up approach described above, this article is interested in what it means to be Romanian and/or Moldovan, and how these different meanings intersect with citizenship practices.

Romanian Citizenship Practices in Moldova

The rest of this article unpacks different explanations underpinning participants' engagement with Romanian citizenship reacquisition (*redobândire*). It focuses on three dimensions: strategic, symbolic and legitimate explanations.

By strategic explanation, I mean a framing of Romanian citizenship that focuses on maximising its instrumental/material benefits and opportunities. This explanation emphasises the value of the status for individuals and their relatives (Stasiulis and Ross, 2006; Balta and Altan-Olcay, 2015). Here, for example, individuals might discuss access to EU rights that would confer a superior set of rights than could be accessed from Romanian citizenship (Harpaz, 2015).

By identity explanation, I mean a framing of Romanian citizenship that focuses on the identity-component of Romanian citizenship. For example, individuals might link citizenship to identifying as Romanian or a sense of belonging to Romania. This 'thicker' notion of citizenship emphasizes the emotional bonds and 'social role' of citizenship (Yanasmayan, 2015; Vasiljević, 2014; Leuchter, 2014). Here, citizenship is a status of belonging with an important identity-component that should be unpacked.

By legitimate explanation, I mean a framing Romanian citizenship that emphasises the rightful, normalness and naturalness of dimension of Romanian citizenship. These explanations rest on the idea that it is Moldovans' right to hold Romanian citizenship. This legitimate dimension is separate to the strategic explanation because it is not tied to what can be gained, or maximised, instrumentally from citizenship acquisition. Similarly, the legitimate dimension is separate to the identity explanation because it does not concern identity, emotional bonds or belonging to Romania as a cultural or political entity. Specifically, individuals do not necessarily seek Romanian citizenship because they identify as Romanian or want this identification recognised by the Romanian state. Rather, the legitimate dimension emphasises how a status is attached to a set of rights. In turn, this is buffered by a sense of past injustice, in particular, that experienced directly by identifiable relatives.

The central contribution of this article is to explore this legitimate dimension, where Romanian citizenship is framed as normal and natural, and as a right for Moldovans, as opposed to something reacquired for its material strategic or identity components. The article also explores the combination of these explanations where the strategic, identity and legitimate explanations are

not necessarily mutually exclusive explanations. Rather, these are interlocking and intersecting explanations.

Analytically, I first break down the participants into five inductively derived conceptual categories. These categories are formed out of areas of identification agreement (within categories) and disagreement (across categories) in terms of how participants identified as Romanian and/or Moldovan, how they identified as Romanian and/or Moldovan and how they positioned themselves vis-à-vis Romania and Moldova:

1. *Organic Romanians* (n=22) had the strongest and organic identification as ethnically Romanian
2. *Cultural Romanians* (n=15) identified ethnically as Romanian, but qualified this by identifying Moldova as their home
3. *Ambivalent Romanians* (n=5) identified as partially but not wholly both Romanian and somewhat Moldovan
4. *Moldovans* (n=10) identified primarily as Moldovan but explained this in terms of being a citizen of Moldova
5. *Linguistic Moldovans* (n=3) identified primarily as Moldovan on the basis that they were culturally and linguistically Moldovan and distinct from those who were Romanian.

I use these categories to unpack the potential association between identification, explanations for engaging with Romanian citizenship and explanations for this engagement (or lack of). These categories also work across the mutually exclusive census categories of ethnic Romanian and Moldovan, to indicate the uncertain rather than hard boundary between the two forms of identification. This also means that I conceive of Romanian more broadly than the Moldovan census, which categorises ethnic Romanians as a minority. Rather I focus on participants' meanings of Romanian and Moldovan identification.

This article does not propose and test a formal hypothesis. Rather, it examines the assumption that there might be an association between the strength of meanings and practices. For this assumption to be borne out by the evidence, we would observe that those identifying more with Romania and as Romanian (Organic Romanians and Cultural Romanians) would engage, and engage more vociferously, with Romanian citizenship compared to those who identified less as Romanian and with Romania (Linguistic Moldovans and Moldovans).

In fact, the article finds differently: engagement with Romanian citizenship is not associated with the strength of identification as Romanian and with Romania. However, the strength of identification is associated with specific explanations. As might be expected, those identifying more vociferously as Romanian and with Romania imbued the reacquisition of Romanian citizenship more symbolically and explained identity to be more significant than those identify less as Romanian and with Romania. Across the identification categories, the article shows that the third dimension of legitimacy is significant where Romanian citizenship was framed as a legitimate right. This helps

to explain the prevalence of Romanian citizenship, because it is constructed as ‘normal’, ‘natural’ and, thus, legitimate.

Organic Romanians

Organic Romanians identified most strongly as Romanian and framed this identification organically, as something essential and biological. For example, Organic Romanians reasoned that they shared not only the ‘same language’ as Romanians (in Romania) but also the ‘same blood’. Most Organic Romanians had reacquired Romanian citizenship for had applied for Romanian citizenship (17/22).

Only a minority of Organic Romanians (5/22) did not want to reacquire Romanian citizenship because they ‘already consider[ed]’ themselves Romanian and saw no reason to ‘change’ this with Romanian citizenship [MD-47, MD-42]. This already-existing identity was buffered either by the rationale that applying was too difficult and costly, particularly for the older participants [MD-47, MD-48, MD-42]. Romanian citizenship also seemed unnecessary because they were willing to ‘wait for [EU] visa liberalization’ which the Moldovan administration had ‘promised’ would happen in 2014 [MD-47, MD-48].⁴ More sentimentally, two participants objected to having to apply for Romanian citizenship reacquisition because they considered Romanian citizenship a ‘natural right’ that should be conferred automatically [MD-14, MD-8].

By contrast with this minority, most Organic Romanians opted to reacquire Romanian citizenship. In justifying this preference, Organic Romanians set themselves apart from what they perceived as the pure instrumentality of those who sought Romanian citizenship ‘not [as] a way to feel Romanian’ but as a ‘formula to go abroad legally’ [MD-42, MD-47, MD-28]. Hence, they framed these ‘profiteers’ as illegitimate seekers of Romanian citizenship because these profiteers were ‘true Russian, like speaking native Russian’ [MD-42, MD-18, MD-49]. Even though technically, Romanian citizenship was reacquired territorially, Organic Romanians conceived of reacquiring Romanian citizenship as an ethnic right that required evidence of a genuine linguistic, cultural and/or ethnic link to Romania.

For Organic Romanians, strategic motivations were still personally significant. As MD-46 described, it would be ‘a little disingenuous’ to deny that the strategic gains of Romanian citizenship played ‘a bit’ of a role in motivating them to reacquire Romanian citizenship [MD-46]. These strategic motivations were complex, concerning not only issues of EU travel and work rights [MD-35, MD-39, MD-11, MD-16, MD-32], but also issues of security. Romanian citizenship functioned as a form of personal ‘insurance’ against future instability [MD-32] and geopolitically, as a ‘balance, so to speak, in the area’ in the case of an eventuality such as if Russia were to ‘strike’ Moldova [MD-46].

Identity motivations were also more important for Organic Romanians than other categories, reflecting their organic identification as Romanian and with Romania. Organic Romanians framed their reacquisition of Romanian citizenship as ‘natural’ [MD-35, MD-18, MD-28, MD-25a, MD-25b,

⁴This sentiment would prove correct with EU visa liberalisation introduced in April 2014.

MD-10, MD-15, MD-39]. As a status, it opened up the possibility to be and become ‘Romanian like them’ (in Romania) where they could live in Romania ‘not as [an] immigrant but as a citizen will all rights and obligations’ [MD-32]. Lastly, in identity terms, it allowed Organic Romanians to ‘become European’ because ‘through Romanian citizenship’ they became also a ‘European citizen’ [MD-35, MD-39, MD-16, MD-39]. In terms of legitimacy, Organic Romanians framed reacquiring Romanian citizenship as ‘my right’. They explained how their grandparents had lost their ‘natural right’ to Romanian citizenship in a ‘very abusive way’ when Moldova was annexed by the Soviet Union [MD-1, MD-2, MD-28, MD-25a, MD-26a, MD-46]. This echoed official Romanian discourse in describing Romanian citizenship as a process of ‘recovery’, which recognized the ‘historic truth’ by signifying they had ‘finally got their right citizenship’ [MD-11, MD-26a].

While Organic Romanians did use a strategic justification for their reacquisition of Romanian citizenship, this was accompanied, if not superseded, by identity and legitimate dimensions. For example, these participants saw Romanian citizenship was a source of pride [MD-16, MD-10]. Significantly, reacquiring Romanian citizenship was not a zero-sum practice. Rather, their ‘obligations’ and support for Romania came after and did not replace, their obligations and support towards Moldova [MD-32, MD-2, MD-14]. Instead, the zero-sum game was between closer affiliation with the EU (via Romania) or Russia, because citizenship was a ‘political tool’ used both by Romania and Russia to ‘take more influence’ in Moldova [MD-10, MD-26a]. Romanian citizenship for Organic Romanians was, therefore, more a signifier of geopolitical allegiances, and of an identity shift towards Romania and the EU, than political allegiances or territorial preferences. In other words, Organic Romanians held geopolitical attachments to Romania and the EU, but this did not translate to wanting Moldova to be politically, and territorially, absorbed into Romania.

Cultural Romanians

Cultural Romanians identified as ethnically Romanian and Moldovan citizens, and conceived of Moldova as their home. The majority of Cultural Romanians had reacquired (8/15), were reacquiring (1/15) or would apply for Romanian citizenship (4/15); a minority had not applied (2/15).

Those Cultural Romanians who had not applied to reacquire Romanian citizenship indicated either regret for not having applied [M-20] or a possible desire [MD-26b]. They felt it was ‘too late’ to apply [MD-20] or too strategic to apply [MD-26]. These Cultural Romanians also criticized those who were motivated primarily by the ‘benefits’ of Romanian citizenship, allowing them to go to Italy or Spain for work [MD-26b].

Those Cultural Romanians who had or were applying for Romanian citizenship were similarly critical of the ‘opportunism’ of others, citing those who could not speak Romanian and had to falsely ‘create [...] some sort of lineage’ to Romania to reacquire Romanian citizenship [MD-43, MD-19, MD-12, MD-4, MD-43, MD-24]. From a personal perspective, Cultural Romanians indicated more of a strategic justification than Organic Romanians. For these Cultural Romanians, Romanian citizenship was a ‘necessity’ that offered the ‘certainty’ and flexibility to travel beyond

post-Soviet space [MD-44, MD-26b, MD-33, MD-9, 43, MD-19, MD-51, MD-12, MD-40]. These ‘practical reasons’ behind reacquiring Romanian citizenship were amplified by acquiring EU rights, where reacquiring Romanian citizenship was ‘our backdoor’ to the EU [MD-40, MD-33]. As Organic Romanians, Cultural Romanians described the complexity of this strategic justification. For them, Romanian citizenship was a form of insurance, demonstrating their desire to seek security from Romania ‘just in case’ the situation in Moldova deteriorated [MD-9, MD-12].

An identity justification for Romanian citizenship was less important for Cultural Romanians, by contrast to Organic Romanians. Still, Cultural Romanians did acknowledge the significance of Romanian citizenship. For them, Romanian citizenship was not ‘another passport’ but a ‘privilege’ they were ‘proud’ of because it granted a sense of ‘legitimacy’ in their ‘connection with Romania that’s also certified in an official manner’ [MD-24, MD-23, MD-45]. Cultural Romanians also problematized this identity justification through articulating a sense of psychological anguish and the interpersonal conflicts which could arise from reacquiring Romanian citizenship. For example, MD-55, whose father was a veteran of the Moldovan army in the Transnistrian conflict (1992-1993), felt a sense of betrayal: ‘how could I consider myself a citizen of another state?’. For her, Romanian citizenship signified the need to ‘renounce my principles, any patriotic principles I have’ because of the material necessity of Romanian citizenship.

Finally, Cultural Romanians, as Organic Romanians underscored the legitimacy of reacquiring Romanian citizenship. They framed Romanian citizenship, atonefully, as an ‘apology’ which ‘recognis[ed] our common history’ and allowed them to get back their ‘real’ citizenship which was removed from their grandparents by the Soviet Union [MD-19, MD-45, MD-24]. Others did not feel ‘real’ Romanian citizens because they resided outside of Romania [MD-12, MD-23, MD-24]. Thus, similar to Organic Romanians, reacquiring Romanian citizenship did not replace their identification or affiliation with Moldova. Rather, these Cultural Romanians remained ‘in love’ with Moldova but now ‘just had two passports, one blue (Moldovan) and one red (Romanian)’ [MD-9, MD-5, MD-19, MD-12].

Ambivalent Romanians

Ambivalent Romanians identified as partially Romanian and Moldovan, differentiating themselves from being wholly Romanian due to different political experiences from Romania, historically (in terms of the Soviet Union) and presently (in terms of Romania being more European). Ambivalent Romanians were split equally between those who had (3/5) and had not (2/5) reacquired Romanian citizenship.

Those who had not reacquired Romanian citizenship recognized the ‘important advantages’ of Romanian citizenship, by permitting access to EU rights and the ‘big European family’ [MD-3]. Rather, it was the financial and time costs of application which inhibited their desire to reacquire Romanian citizenship, where they did not want to spend time changing family documents [MD-17].

As Cultural and Organic Romanians, Ambivalent Romanians criticized strategic motivations.

They explained how ‘not everyone’ reacquired Romanian citizenship ‘in a normal or good way’ by using it only to ‘work in a shitty job (in Spain or Italy) and come back here and buy a cool car’ [MD-50]. It was still a strategic and not a ‘very nationalistic’ practice [MD-50]. Here the temporal element was noticeable: for those reacquiring in the late 2000s, the strategic benefits, of access to EU rights such as travel, were a popular reason [MD-27, MD-50] and contrasted with those who reacquired in the 1990s, while studying in Romania, because ‘why not’ have it [MD-6]. The strategic opportunities for citizenship, such as access to a ‘better education’ and to ‘change’ where you live, were also important.

Although identity discourses were absent from Ambivalent Romanians, they still framed Romanian citizenship as legitimate. These participants explained how they were ‘getting back the citizenship [...] because my grandpa, grandmother had it’ [MD-27]. Thus, Romania’s policy of ‘gathering citizens’ was a ‘way of (Romania) saying we are sorry’ for having ‘evacuated’ Moldova [MD-27]. Hence, Ambivalent Romanians normalized reacquiring Romanian citizenship. They believed that Romania was neither ‘exceptional’ in providing this right, nor were they ‘breaking any laws’ in reacquiring Romanian citizenship [MD-27, MD-6].

As Cultural and Organic Romanians, reacquiring Romanian citizenship did not affect Ambivalent Romanians’ partial identification as Romanian, or with Romania [MD-6]. Instead, reacquiring Romanian citizenship enabled a bottom-up process of ‘individual European integration’ over the last twenty years. This was the ‘greatest outcome’ for them: to be able to travel to the EU and ‘feel for the first time that I’m a European citizen’ [MD-27].

Moldovans

Moldovans identified both culturally and politically as Moldovan. Most Moldovans had reacquired (4/10) or were waiting to reacquire (3/10) Romanian citizenship, while a minority had not (3/10).

Those Moldovans who had not reacquired Romanian citizenship explained they did not ‘need’ Romanian citizenship [MD-52, MD-21]. As Ambivalent Romanians, they were either discouraged by the ‘bureaucratic’ process or did not see the feel the necessary push factors to see reacquiring Romanian citizenship as strategically useful [MD-52, MD-21]. The exception was MD-56 who had recently decided he was now ‘forced’ to reacquire Romanian citizenship after he had a Romanian visa application refused. He previously felt constrained by the costs, watching his wife spend ‘all the time and money and nerve cells [...] to collect all the articles’. Because his brother would apply, he could now share the costs (financial and time) of applying, because his brother would ‘take care of the articles’, demonstrating the familial aspects which collectivized the decisions of individuals in reacquiring Romanian citizenship [MD-56].

For Moldovans who had reacquired Romanian citizenship, strategic motivations dominated. Romanian citizenship ‘makes life easier’ by opening ‘more possibilities’, enabling them to travel a ‘few times a year’ to EU states and the opportunity of a ‘good education in western universities’ [MD-34, MD-38, MD-37]. By comparison, only a minority explained identity motivations originating

from the idea they had ‘Romanian ancestry’ which legitimized their right to reacquire Romanian citizenship [MD-36, MD-34]. Unlike some Ambivalent and Cultural Romanians, Moldovans, interestingly, did not discuss identity conflicts either, indicating their framing of Romanian citizenship as a strategic practice.

While Moldovans did not describe changes to how they identified with Romania, they indicated changes from their equalizing status vis-à-vis the EU and Romania. Moldovans were more critical than other categories, of the potentially negative impacts of Romanian citizenship because of their perception that Romanian citizenship could contribute to Moldova’s depopulation by enabling those with Romanian citizenship to work abroad [MD-36]. Other Moldovans resisted this discourse believing that ‘most’ who wanted to leave ‘they already did that’, without reacquiring Romanian citizenship though not legally [MD-34].

Although they did not frame Romanian citizenship as a form of security, Moldovans discussed it as a proxy of weak state capacity. For Moldovans, the popularity of Romanian citizenship was an ‘indicator of lack of performance’ and belief in Moldova’s ‘commitments’ to its citizens [MD-21, MD-56]. Here Moldovans, unlike previous categories, pathologised elite practices of Romanian citizenship believing this signified a lack of belief ‘in the future of the country they rule’ by accessing something that could allow them to invest outside of Moldova [MD-56]. They did not frame Romania’s practices like Russia’s policy of passportization [MD-34]. Yet Moldovans did see Romanian citizenship as a ‘very strong tool’ of influence even if it would act ‘aggressively’ towards Moldova, because Romania was able to ‘at least attract[ing] people from Moldova to become closer with Romania [MD-34, MD-56]. Romanian citizenship allowed Romania to at least ‘claim’ its ‘influence’ and ‘right’ in Moldova even if this was not ‘with arms’ [MD-56]. Indeed, some participants believed the proliferation of Romanian citizenship went beyond influence, as a process of unification ‘post-factum’, where it would become a fact via the growing Romanian body citizenry in Moldova [MD-7c]. Moldovans’ discussion of the impacts of Romanian citizenship was wider reaching and critical, politically and geopolitically, than that of categories with stronger identity attachments to Romania, i.e. Organic and Cultural Romanians.

Linguistic Moldovans

Linguistic Moldovans identified as culturally and linguistically Moldovan, and distinct from Romanian. They were the only participants who identified their language as different to Romanian. They are labelled as Linguistic Moldovans to emphasise this difference, which was the main area of difference to other categories, in particular to Moldovans. Unlike previous categories, Linguistic Moldovans were the only category where none had reacquired, or had any interest to reacquire, Romanian citizenship. They felt neither the same push factors, stemming from problems acquiring visas as previous categories, nor pull the factors, of wanting to work abroad that Linguistic Moldovans believed ‘forced’ others to apply for Romanian citizenship [MD-41, MD-57b].

Rather, Linguistic Moldovans maligned Romanian citizenship. They saw it as a ‘taboo’ to

Table 1: Engagement in Moldovan with Romanian Kin-State Practices

	N=	Interested to Acquire/ Have Acquired Roma- nian Citizenship	Motivation for Acquiring Citizenship
<i>Organic Romanians</i>	22	Y	Identity, Strategic & Legitimate
<i>Cultural Romanians</i>	15	Y	Strategic & Legitimate
<i>Ambivalent Romanians</i>	5	Y	Strategic & Legitimate
<i>Moldovans</i>	10	Y	Strategic & Legitimate
<i>Linguistic Moldovans</i>	3	N	Malign

be anything other than a Moldovan citizen [MD-54], and indicative of Romania’s ‘capture’ of the Moldovan state [MD-41]. While they were open to citizens reacquiring Romanian citizenship, Linguistic Moldovans saw elite who held Romanian citizenship as having a conflict of interest because ‘whose state interests do they [officials] defend? Moldovan or Romanian? I have my doubts’ [MD-41, MD-57b].

Unlike most participants, who legitimized and normalized Romanian citizenship, Linguistic Moldovans framed Moldova as an anomaly for allowing public officials to hold dual citizenship: ‘imagine that the [UK] Queen has a US passport. Is that even possible?’ [MD-41, MD-57b]. Emphasising these conflicts of interest heightened Linguistic Moldovans’ feelings of being ‘under occupation’ from Romania because they questioned the loyalty of the current Moldovan administration because they ‘swore allegiance to Romania’ [MD-41, MD-57b].

Kin-State Citizenship: Legitimate, Strategic vs Identity

Empirically, this article found a wide engagement with Romanian citizenship. All categories, except Linguistic Moldovans, were interested in reacquiring, and were reacquiring, Romanian citizenship (Table 1). The prevalence and legitimacy of Romanian citizenship among research participants does suggest the wider popularity of reacquiring Romanian citizenship among the Moldovan population. Further, it demonstrates the extent to which identification as Romanian or with Romania was not a motivating factor for practising Romanian citizenship. The exception was Romania’s strongest critics—Linguistic Moldovans—who pathologised Romanian citizenship as signifying Romania’s colonial attitude towards Moldova.

Participants’ explanations for reacquiring Romanian citizenship were more associated with participants’ identification. Strategic and legitimate explanations were important across the categories; what differed was how these were combined with identity motivations (Organic and Cultural Romanians) or not (Ambivalent Romanians, Moldovans). For Organic Romanians, identity explanations were given greater weight, outpacing, but not wholly replacing, strategic motivations. For Cultural

Romanians, identity explanations were not necessarily as important as strategic explanations. Still, as Organic Romanians, Cultural Romanians criticized those who became Romanian citizens without adequate connection, or commitment, to Romania (i.e. ethnic Russians and Russian speakers).

Participants' strategic explanations were also more complex than previously discussed by Heintz (2008) and Suveica (2013) in Moldova vis-à-vis Romania, and beyond (Harpaz, 2015). These authors emphasize the strategy of seeking dual citizenship from an EU member-state to gain access to EU rights and benefits, such as to work and travel in the EU. Rather, Romanian citizenship was sought, strategically, as an alternative source of security. Participants wanted to insure themselves against domestic risks. Finally, participants wanted the rights—and status, for Organic Romanians—that could be gained from the EU, of becoming equal to Romanian citizens, and to citizens from the whole EU space.

Research by Skulte-Ouaiss (2013) on Lebanon demonstrates the wider discussion of security associations of dual citizenship. Resonating with this article's analysis of Romanian citizenship in Moldova, Skulte-Ouaiss (2013: 133) explains how in Lebanon dual citizenship was a "safeguard[s]" to be used when things got rough at home, while allowing them to remain in their homeland when times are good'. Dual citizenship was therefore a form of security that was both 'physical, economic, religious, social and, above all, practical' (Ibid 138). Dual citizenship offer a form of insurance against anxiety about the future political (and geopolitical) trajectory of the home-state, whether Lebanon, Turkey or Moldova (Balta and Altan-Olcay, 2015). Dual citizenship in these cases offered a way of hedging bets by accessing a status that permitted exit should it be needed.

Lastly, the empirical analysis showed the importance of a third legitimate dimension, beyond the identity-strategic spectrum. Beyond identity and strategy, Romanian citizenship was a legitimate and normal practice. The normality and legitimacy of Romanian citizenship in Moldova indicates the extent to which Moldova is becoming a state comprised by a large Romanian post-territorial citizenry. This process of reacquisition brought participants closer to Romania. It also affected their identification as European, more than as Romanian, and did not imply a loss of loyalty to Moldova.

Of participants who were engaging with this practice, Moldovans were most critical, in terms of its facilitation of depopulation, but also in terms of the state weakness it implied, where public goods, such as security, jobs and opportunities for development, could now be sought from Romania. This shift of dependency towards Romania concerns not only mass everyday practices, but also the everyday practices of the elite, framed as both banal (Cultural Romanians) and malevolent (Moldovans, Linguistic Moldovans) by participants who saw it as communicating a lack of faith in Moldova's future. Here there is a tension between the ideational/symbolic legitimacy that Moldova can maintain, which does not replace loyalty to the Moldovan state, and the indication of Moldova's weak political/geopolitical and social capacity to provide the security and opportunities that its citizens want, and can now access elsewhere.

Conclusion

This article offers a practice-centred perspective to demonstrate the need and value of considering the meanings and lived experience of kin-state citizenship. Previous dual citizenship literature focus on the normative, legal and institutional provision of citizenship. This literature primarily considers citizenship acquisition vis-à-vis migration, as opposed to kin-state citizenship policies. While both speak to the increasing phenomenon of dual citizenship, why individuals acquire citizenship from a kin-state in which they do not reside poses a different set of questions to why migrants acquire states from states in which they do reside. The implications are also different. Proliferation of dual citizenship via migration might indicate post-national tendencies. However, proliferation of dual citizenship because of kin-state policies might, rather, indicate a kind of post-territorial ethnic politics. To date, this literature has focused largely on questions of top-down institutions as opposed to bottom-up practices.

An emerging literature has sought to rectify this by focusing precisely on the practice of kin-state citizenship acquisition, arguing that individuals acquire kin-state citizenship because of symbolic or strategic reasons. Using the case of Romanian citizenship reacquisition in Moldova, first, this article considered both strategic and identity motivations for engaging with this practice. Second, this article also considered how these motivational logics might be combined. Finally, this article also considered a third legitimate dimension. This legitimate dimension goes beyond thick (identity) and thin (material/strategic) ideas of citizenship to demonstrate the significance of a legitimizing logic which underpins engagement with Romanian citizenship in Moldova.

While an identity/thick logic was more prevalent among those identifying more with Romania and as Romanian, a legitimizing logic was found across identification categories. In turn, this demonstrates the importance of the right to Romanian citizenship, irrespective of identity ties to Romania and Romanian citizenship. This legitimate underpinning of Romanian citizenship is matched by the institutional basis of Romanian citizenship which defines the status as one of recovery of a right unfairly denied from the antecedents of those eligible (up to third generation), who can recover the citizenship status that was withdrawn from the Soviet regime at the end of the Second World War. The institutional basis underpinning the eligibility of Moldovans to reacquire Romanian citizenship establishes a ‘historical legal relationship’, as opposed to an ethnic relationship, between contemporary Moldovan citizens and the Romanian state, via former Romanian citizens as the antecedents of those eligible (Waterbury, 2009: 156). In turn, this establishes a powerful personal association with such a right. Recovering Romanian citizenship is attached to personal family experiences and grievances that left participants’ grandparents and great-grandparents’ in a different state.

This article argues that understandings of kin-state citizenship need to be informed, first by the practices of citizenship. Second, focusing on the practices of citizenship illuminates how discourses of legitimacy can underpin, normalize and explain the prevalence and desire for kin-state citizenship practices, buttressed by the practical and strategic gains of such a citizenship status. This legitimate

argument offers a third dimension, beyond a strategic-identity continuum, for understanding kin-state citizenship practices in other cases where kin-state citizenship is tied to territorial, and familial, loss (e.g. Hungary, Serbia, Croatia, Bulgaria). In other words, it shows how kin-states can appeal via citizenship policies to individuals beyond those who identify with the kin-state. It also shows how kin-state engagement is not just about identifying with the kin-state but about the normality and legitimacy of engaging with a kin-state and its citizenship policies.

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