Revisiting Fatalistic Political Cultures*

Alina Mungiu-Pippidi**

Abstract

The transition in East European countries generated many theoretical problems, especially regarding political culture. It is as difficult to establish where the east European political culture is rooted as to describe where those societies are heading to. The article is focused on Romanian case, examining Romanian political culture's late parting from Communism, its 'alleged' rural character, the problems of corruption and political trust, trying to separate 'hard' legacies such as development (structural constraints) from 'soft' causes - socialization, media consuming and to determine to what extent the culture and the history can affect the present evolution of a country. Two historical 'structural' legacies were proved to matter in this analysis: underdevelopment (the ratio rural/urban) and the depth of penetration by the Communist regime of the Romanian society. The 'soft constraints' are formal institutions which can be changed (such as a poor electoral law), informal institutions and opinions which run counter to democracy. The article wrap up some conclusions of interest to political culture change and democratization, defining political culture of the transition as a mix of residual and recent attitudes, inherited formal institutions and continuous internalization of new norms. The past, even affecting the evolution of the country, is not a fatality, the import of institutions being possible and those who doubt about it should seek the causes of institutional failure in the area of their implementation, not in the "culture".

Key words: political culture**,** corruption, public trust**,** underdevelopment, authoritarianism, structural legacies.

** Alina Mungiu-Pippidi is a Professor of Political Science with the Romanian National School of Government and Administration

Three meanings of political culture

Making sense of the political post-Communist transition has proved a difficult task. At least the economical transition had a clear start- the command economy-- and a clear target – the free market. In terms of political culture even the word 'transition' has little meaning, and the early warning that East European studies are still far away of forging a theory of change of political culture has not been yet rendered obsolete (Von Beyme 1994: 349). First, do we actually know where East European political culture comes *from*? From before the Communist past, a time that adepts of cultural legacies theories depict as doomed by 'etatism' and 'collectivism' even before the advent of Communism (Schopflin 1978), or corrupt to such an extent that it perverted even Communism (Jowitt 1993)? From the less remote Communist times, assuming that the regime was successful in imposing its culture to both the elites and the community? And how did the community political culture look during Communism? As all analysts point out, comparative research in Eastern Europe suffers from a 'tabula rasa' problem as the partially reliable and comparable data were collected only as late as 1990 (Plasser and Pribersky: 1996: 5) Surveys prior to this date are suspect of pro-regime bias and therefore useless. Second, where are these societies headed for? Towards a universal type of liberal or Western democratic political culture? But does such an entity even exist, or rather we deal with a broad panel of different liberal cultures, from the individualistic Anglo-Saxons to the more collectivistic Germans, from the 'feminine' Scandinavians to the 'masculine' Americans (Hofstede 1998)? Differences in institutional culture among West Europeans are a common complaint within EU, where a 'Northern' culture and a 'Mediterranean' one are allegedly in tense cohabitation. And even assuming we know the two ends of this continuum, what lies in between? What is 'transition', a mixture of competing residual beliefs with newly acquired ones, and when comes the moment to decide which ones have managed to get the upper hand for good?

Three distinct meanings of 'political culture' have been used in connection to postcommunist Europe so far. The first considers 'political culture' to be a configuration arising out of salient patterns of public opinion in regard to politics, following the traditional approach of Almond and Verba. Through aggregating individual psychological data this view creates the 'national' on the basis of individual representations of politics which are

shared by the majority of the population. Two distinct problems arise here: one, that majorities of public opinion shift constantly on a considerable number of issues; second, that many crucial political issues fall short of meeting the approval of clear majorities. The former has an outstanding example in Eastern Europe, where the number of people saying in surveys that one party systems are better has been gradually eroded, year after year, since 1991 when a Times Mirror poll first asked this question until the present time. The latter often emerges in the headlines whenever polls report that public opinion is divided: on many political issues, from war to abortion, pollsters report that we face two 'countries'. We have two Americas, one in favor of gun control, the other in favor of unlimited freedom and two East Europes, one constantly voting former Communist parties, the other voting former anticommunist parties. Majorities shift across time and across issues, making 'national' political cultures hard to grasp. If we are to believe Inglehart's (1997) demonstration, the whole postcommunist world is only one 'culture', where Catholics, Protestants, Orthodox and Confucianists alike share the same earthly ideals of survival above more refined ones.

The second meaning of political culture refers to what the French call 'mentalités'. Mentalities are more than attitudes towards politics: they are actual behaviors rooted in widespread norms on politics. Those go far beyond current issues of politics, and are infrequently polled. Putting one's dentist on the payroll of the European Commission as a consultant is more acceptable in some cultures than in others; relying on majorities rather than building a broad consensus over an issue is, again, a common pattern in some countries, but not in others. Mentalities are better understood as 'informal institutions', such as described by Douglas North, widespread societal norms and procedures. It was also North who remarked that informal institutions emerge out of habit, so in times of political and economical change they often reflect the formal institutions of the previous, rather than the current regime. This observation may be of crucial importance in observing postcommunist societies. "The past can only be made intelligible as a story of institutional evolution' wrote Douglas North in the aftermath of the fall of Communism, and 'today's and tomorrow choices are shaped by the past' (North 1990: vii). This approach to 'political culture' is common especially in policy literature. Studies on the legal or business culture of postcommunist Europe have often taken this

'institutionalist' perspective. It was even argued that any other approach than deciphering the logic of informal institutions out of their specific historical context cannot but fail to explain postcommunism (Gelman 2001).

Finally, there is a more metaphysical vision of political culture, shared from cultural theory to area studies and comparative politics. This follows in the steps of 19th century thought (represented, for instance, by historian Leopold Ranke) that history is an expression of national 'character' or culture, and has met the endorsement in the 20th century by a string of famous authors, from George F. Kennan to Samuel Huntington or Aaron Wildafsky. Insidiously, but persistently, it is this particular vision of political culture, which more often than not colors the media stories on a specific country. Concessions from representatives of the other approaches to this one are also frequent: "Political culture is an integral part of the general culture…" Sidney Verba avowed (Verba 1969: 521). Similarly, Carl Schmitt's distinction between politics and the concept of the political was rediscovered in recent decades by scholars seeking a more anthropological approach to highlight the 'political' texture embedded within the general cultural tissue. As Geertz once put it, 'Culture (…) is not cults and customs, but the structure of meaning through which men give shape to their experience, and politics is not coups and constitutions, but one of the principal arenas in which such structures publicly unfold.' (Geertz 1973: 311-12).

Needless to say, the more difficult a political transition is, and the less relevant public opinion data proves in explaining actual regime performance, the more the need increases to turn to the third variant of political culture to explain things. It works for politicians, because it lays the blame on history and the people, diminishing elite agency. It is convenient for constituencies, because it justifies poor electoral choices, subsuming that political culture of elites, regardless of their ideology, is to blame, so one needs not pay attention to politics. And finally it is convenient for the international community, because it reinforces whatever their initial policy approach: a country is doing poorly not because it is neglected, but is neglected because its history carries the obvious germ of doom, suggesting investment in that particular country cannot change its fate and is therefore a waste.

Romania, the main object of this chapter, was almost as a general rule addressed under the last meaning of political culture, with grand cultural

explanations provided to explain poor performance (Shafir 1985; Wildafsky 1987; Jowitt 1993; Janos 1993). At a closer look, its performance is however not so poor, seeing that in 1989 Romania was the worst totalitarian regime of postcommunist Europe, except Albania, and in 1999 at the Helsinki summit was invited to join the European Union - a process which may prove longer and more strenuous than Romanians would wish, but which is likely to end twenty years after the 1989 Revolution. Compared to the speedy integration of the Baltic countries, Romania has indeed performed worse - but its population is almost four times that of the Baltics together. Furthermore, Romania falls on the wrong side of the civilizations' border drawn by Samuel Huntington (1993) as it is overwhelmingly Christian Orthodox and was tributary to the Ottoman Empire from the 15th century to the 19th. It is allegedly haunted by Robert Kaplan's Balkan ghosts, nationalism and anti-Semitism. However, despite having an important and politically self-assertive Hungarian minority in Transylvania (7 % of the total population) Romania was not the stage for another 'typical' ethnic conflict, but evolved into a power-sharing polity, with Hungarians associated with government since 1996 on. A British 19th century guide also characterized Bucharest briefly as 'the most dissolute' city in Europe. As for Wildafsky, one of the four political culture types he sketches, the 'fatalistic' one, is based entirely on Romania (1987). Its inspiration lies in the Romanian folk ballad, *Mioritza.* Mioritza is the story of a Romanian shepherd who reacts to the news that his envious fellow shepherds plan to kill him in order to steal his herd with perfect passivity, taking ritual steps to meet his death and a cosmic wedding with the Universe. The ballad was interpreted in various ways. Michael Shafir, a scholar of anti-Semitism in Romania quotes it as a proof that Romanian political culture is based on envy (1985). Wildafsky cross-tabulates the strength of group boundaries with the nature of prescriptions binding groups. *Whether prescriptions are strong and groups are weak - so that decisions get frequently made for them by external factors* -- the result is what he calls a 'fatalistic' political culture. In such cultures people are unable to fully exploit both freedom, being distrustful towards the utility of free will exercise, and power - as mutual trust is low, collective action is difficult to achieve. Wildafsky's theory has the advantage to bring into the picture the strongest determinant of Romanian history: external intervention, otherwise just completing the trip from gloom to doom by eternalizing bad history through the creation of 'fatalism' as a *permanent* cultural trait. That 'external factors'

have historically played a more important role than domestic agency there is little doubt: this is the part of the world that Barrington Moore jr. considered should not be included at all in discussions on political change, as 'the decisive causes of their politics lie outside their own boundaries.'(1996: xii). The Romanian national state was indeed created by cheating into a *fait accompli* in 1859 the Great Powers, which did not approve of the unification of Romanian principalities under the banner of Carol von Hohenzollern-Sigmaringen. In 1940 the Ribentropp-Molotov pact deprived Romania of important territories inhabited by Romanian citizens, giving a mortal blow to the legitimacy of constitutional monarchy. The Romanian Communism which followed was entirely Soviet sponsored, and on the Moscow scrap of paper Winston Churchill handed to Stalin (according to his own narrative and Anthony Eden's *Memoirs*) Romania was noted with the least Western interest of all Eastern European countries: Soviet Union 90% of influence, West 10%. Even the 1989 fall of Ceausescu, betrayed by the Army and Securitate in front of a yet manageable popular uprising has also been attributed on the basis of some evidence to a plot led by Moscow. *Political culture matters only when people are free to choose the form of government they prefer, and for Romanians this is a brand new experience.*

Only after 1989 has 'political culture' started to matter more, as the whole world reached a degree of liberalization without precedent. But how much did it matter is still under dispute. On December 25, after the most violent popular uprising from all East European revolutions dictator Nicolae Ceausescu and his wife were shot after a brief trial. Among the few people who assisted at the execution some - quite unknown to the public then - played a major role in the history of post-communist Romania. Their presence there and the role they played in the years to come, especially in the violent repression of the opposition by the miners in June 1990 lead several observers to conclude the popular uprising which lead to the flee of Ceausescu was successful only because of a secret agreement between the Army, the Securitate and some key politicians favored by Gorbatchev such as Ion Iliescu. Ion Iliescu, however, had popular appeal - he won three out of four presidential elections he participated to, helped by a Constitutional interpretation which practically allowed him three terms in office. Formal institutional arrangements - such as state monopoly of the electronic media from 1990 till 1996 - prove difficult to separate from informal institutions -

people's habit to vote politicians who identify with the state more - and pure attitudes, such as residual Communism, collectivism and so forth. *This suggests that any meaningful discussion of political culture must go far beyond the examination of cross-sectional surveys on public opinion, even beyond models created on the basis of such surveys.* In other words, if political culture is treated as an independent variable, the evidence is there to show political culture matters little or not at all. Outside factors (the decision of the EU to enlarge also to the Balkans) and structural constraints (Communist heritage), have such an overwhelming importance in explaining the trajectory of Romania among Eastern Europe countries that little room is left for other explanations (Bunce 1999; Kitschelt 2001). If political culture is treated, however, as a dependent variable, and our concern is more to explain what triggers changes in political culture, for instance how does political culture relate to political change in general, the story is worth following. Comparative surveys show little to no difference in the legal culture items, for instance.

It seems that Romanians are no more willing than other East Europeans to cheat on tax, travel without paying a fare on public transportation and infringe laws. Objective data, as monitored by the World Bank or the European Commission, point, however, to the fact that legal indicators of Romania reflect a performance of law and order agencies inferior to Central Europe. *We have to look at the relationship between formal institutions, informal institutions and public opinion to understand the complexity of political culture in times of dramatic political and social change.* In other words, we have to follow the horizontal causal links roughly suggested in *Fig 1* to capture the complexity of political change, placing public opinion in a broader context. This chapter looks at Romania from such a perspective and will therefore integrate subjective data with some objective indicators as well. The 1995 World Values Survey (WVS from now on) polled in Romania in 1993 by ICCV, so roughly a decade ago, provides the general comparative framework to discuss Romania. Three more recent polls, two from 2000 (2000a and 2000b), and one from 2001, jointly sponsored by the Eurobarometer and the UNDP, all executed by CURS, allow an update of the state of affairs in Romanian political culture.

Fig. 1. Formal institutions, informal institutions and political culture. A tripartite model

Political structure

Political culture

(formal institutions)

(aggregates of

beliefs and affects

Individual attitudes on politics

Individual political resources (status)

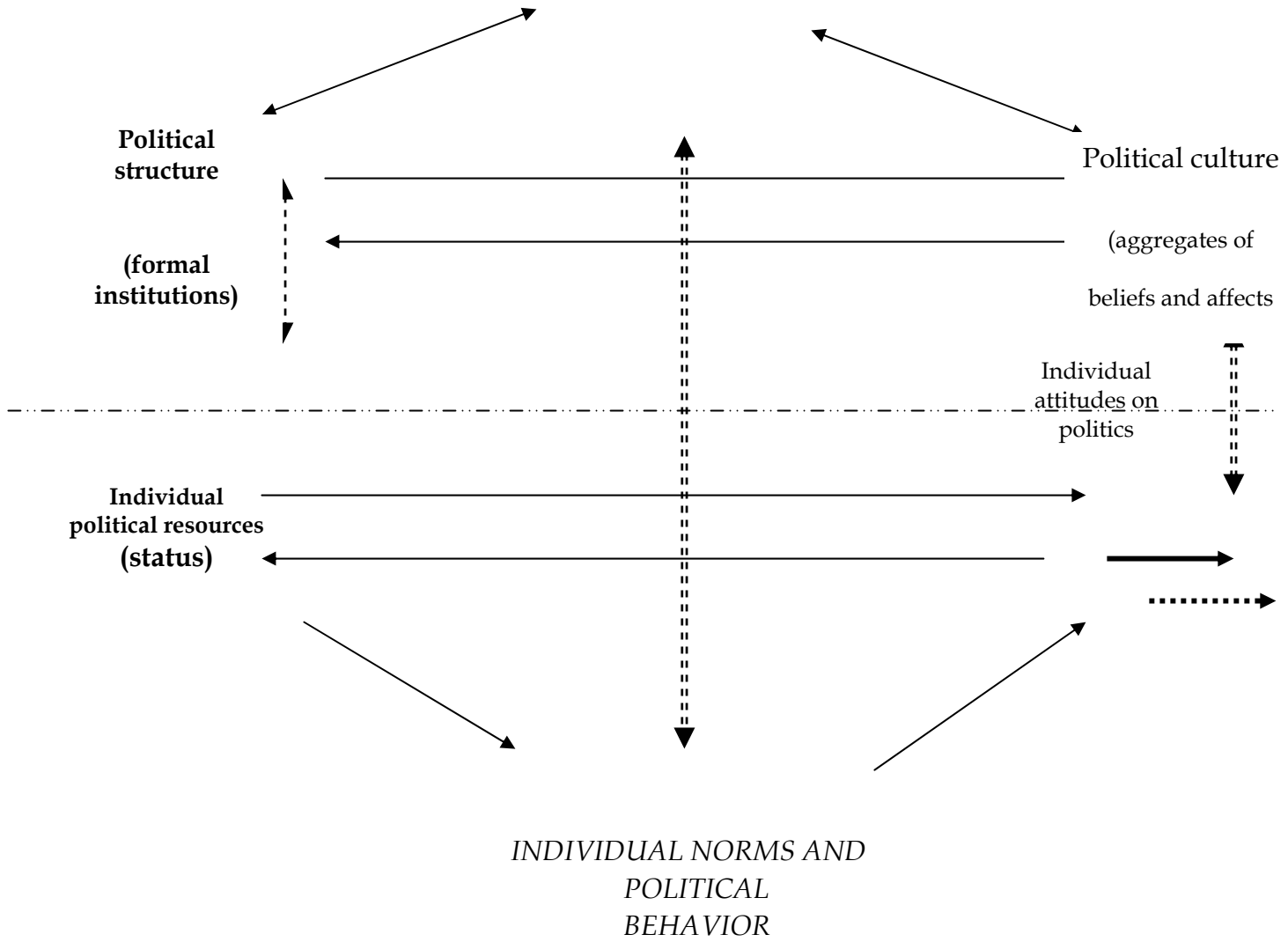*INDIVIDUAL NORMS AND POLITICAL BEHAVIOR*

Figure 1 illustrates the complex links between formal institutions, informal institutions and political culture, restricted to the Almond and Verba definition. It helps put my analytic tools to the proper use and understand their limitations as well. In terms of legal culture, for instance, the formal institution is the organization and formal procedures of the justice system, from constitutional provisions to organization of Courts; the informal institution is people's habit to bribe Court clerks to shorten the length of trial (usually between 3-4 years); the 'political culture' is made of attitudes towards formal and informal institutional arrangements. Do people like to bribe? Do they perceive this state of affairs as normal? Is their corruption as citizens what triggers corruption of the judiciary, or are there institutional constraints, which cause corruption and the attitudes of the public will show disapproval and discontent? Finally, we should not forget we deal with self-reports. Even if we find significant associations in our analysis, those will tell us something on individuals, not on countries, these fictitious aggregates of opinion. Figure 1 is a sort of mirror, separating the societal level from the individual level, tracing the correspondences between the two. Inferences from the individual level do tell us something about society as well, but the invisible border between real people and abstract aggregates should be reminded at all times.

The rest of this chapter will be divided in three section and final conclusions. Each section will examine the evidence for the three major 'stories' of Romanian political culture: its late and somehow incomplete parting from Communism; the problem of corruption and political trust; and the 'alleged' rural character of Romanian political culture. In each and every of these sections I will look at the causation of the majority representations and attitudes, trying to separate 'hard' legacies such as development (structural constraints from now on) from 'soft' causes- socialization, from religion to reading newspapers). Finally, I will wrap up some conclusions of interest to political culture change and democratization.

Authoritarians into democrats?

Romanian exceptionalism was often invoked in connection with the control of its political transition mostly by elites close to the former Communist party, after a popular uprising which produced more casualties than all East

European change of regimes put together: more than one thousand people died in the confusing week of the 'Romanian Revolution' slaughtered first by the Army (before December 22), than unidentified snipers. Despite this heavy toll paid by the largest cities, in the first free and fair elections after the fall of Communism, when Central Europeans voted for anticommunist parties, Romanians voted for a party, which, although not a direct Communist successor, was openly defending important features of the Communist heritage. The National Salvation Front (NSF) started as a grassroots movement, but agencies of the former regime, such as the Army and secret services have gradually managed to get more and more control. The extent to which the heritage of Communist times was tackled with is a crucial factor in explaining transitions, but it is in its turn dependent on how the power struggle between the Communist establishment and the new political elite was solved. Romania had the hardest of all Communist regimes in Eastern Europe, and its shaking off in 1989 was possible only due to the consent of Ceausescu's own Army and Securitate (political police). Their agreement to a change of regime came in the same package with their own life insurance, however: even before passing a new Constitution in 1991 the first freely elected Romanian Parliament adopted a law on National Security sealing most of the Communist archives indefinitely. Except for a few dignitaries who had been close to the Ceausescu family, nobody was ever tried for crimes during the Communist times. Attempts to finalize the trial of two generals who ordered the shooting of anti-Ceausescu protesters by the anti-Communist government of 1996-2000 were reversed by the next government of Ion Iliescu, the former liberal apparatchik who had received the power from the Army in 1989. Protests against what intellectuals and the media saw as 'neo-communists' at the beginning of the transition decreased considerably after the failure of anti-Communists, in their turn, to deliver on their 1996 electoral promises, and their subsequent defeat in the 2000 elections. The warning behind these protests remains real: the absence of decommunization may render reforms ineffective. Not the symbolic fight against Communism, but the elimination of the lasting effects of residual Communism was the point behind the civil society movement after 1989 in Romania. This vision was openly fought against by the government of Ion Iliescu, three times victor in presidential elections, in the name of national consensus and 'putting the past behind'.

As elections, from 1990 on, were won for three times out of four by postcommunist parties, the voters' choice and voters' values must have played some role, despite many manipulations through the state-owned media. It is due to this silent but firm endorsement of postcommunism by the public that most authors see the Romanian political transition as different from Central European ones. For most of the transition the society was indeed divided between urban, higher-educated people voting center-right and rural inhabitants and workers in state-owned bankrupt industrial mega-enterprises voting postcommunist. The former were in favor of the reform and Western integration, the latter were afraid of it. In 1990 polls showed majorities believing more than one political party unnecessary, that the state should be in charge of everything, and "Although he went too far, a leader of the type of Ceausescu is what we need today'. This strong cleavage persisted as late as 2000, to become more and more blurred in recent years, as the distinction between anti-communists and postcommunists gradually lost relevance for the policy agenda dominated by the common project of European integration.

Similarly, the number of people considering the multi-party system the norm increased, and the number of those endorsing antidemocratic alternatives decreased, as citizens were re-socialized. Not all the new democrats have become consistent democrats from the onset: *Fig 2* reflects the overlapping of those who endorse representative democracy with those who barely disguise their antipathy of politics behind a preference for technocratic, not political government, and those who openly opt for a non-democratic alternative in the same time. The number of 'inconsistent' democrats was higher in Romania in the early nineties compared to Central European countries: the situation has evolved since then, however. 47% of Romanians would have preferred a strong leader to representative democracy in 1993 (WVS) compared to only 30 % in 2001 (Eurobarometer). Non-political governments, by experts and technocrats remained the most popular, as Romanian grew more and more dissatisfied with their politicians.

Fig. 2. Overlapping democratic and autocratic tendencies

	Democracy best	Strong leaders	Army rule	Experts
Czech R.	91	16	5	78
Slovakia	89	19	5	78
Poland	88	-	-	-
Hungary	85	19	5	78
Slovenia	88	25	6	80
Romania 1993	87	47	25	40
Romania 2001	79	30	13	81
Bulgaria	80	62	17	46

Source: WVS 1995, except Romania 2001 (2001)

Nevertheless, at the beginning of the transition there were fewer consistent democrats in Romania and Bulgaria compared to the Czech Republic or Hungary, even if the gap has narrowed considerably over the last decade. Several factors can be blamed for this. First and foremost, it is the Communist heritage. Romania had four millions of Communist party members, more than double the average of the region as a whole. Widespread institutionalization of cooperation with the Communist regime combined with the strongest repression in the region (the two cannot in any event be separated) is likely to be accountable for a difficult democratization. Development legacies are also severe: Romania has roughly 40% of its population still employed in agriculture: Poland has less than half this figure, Hungary and the Czech Republic less than 10 % and even Bulgaria has around 26% only. These 'structural constraints' legacies compete with cultural explanations, blaming the Christian Orthodox denomination for the lack of appetite for democracy of Romanian and Bulgarians compared to Catholic and Protestant Central Europeans. Another range of explanations blames the difficult economic transition - regimes have to perform to gain legitimacy, and if a regime produces only poverty and social inequality citizens would become disenchanted regardless if free and fair elections were regularly held. While it is obvious any explanation accounting for antidemocratic attitudes cannot be but multi-folded, my main interest here is

to check the structural legacies factors. To do that, the democratic or autocratic attitude was used as a dependent variable repeatedly in multivariate linear regression models testing these competing explanations simultaneously. The first set uses only data from Romania, therefore comparing between Romanians, democrats and less democrats. The second uses the WVS pooled sample for the whole region. Two complementary Romanian models are shown in fig 3, one with dependent variable preference for strong leaders (I, WVS data), the other using as dependent the attitude towards eventual closure of Parliament (II, UNDP and Eurobarometer data). The latter survey was used for including a question on membership in the former Communist party.

Both sets of models show that the 'structural constraints' variables influence democratic attitudes importantly. Rural inhabitants are likely to be less democratic than urban ones even when controlling for income, wealth and education. Former membership in the Communist party, all other things being equal, predicts a weaker commitment to democracy. The young and the more educated are more likely to be Democrats. Romanians are overwhelmingly Orthodox by birth, but no difference can be found between those who attend religious services or believe in God and those who do not when it comes to attitudes towards democracy.

Fig. 3. Determinants of democratic/autocratic attitudes in Romania

Determinants	Model 1	Strong leader agreed 1 to 4 (against) Scales and wording	Model 2	Parliament abolished from 1 to 4 (disagree) Scales and wording
Wealth	ns	Subjective satisfaction with household situation, from 1 to 4.	ns	Individual income the previous month in five steps.
Education	ns	1='primary' 2='elementary and vocational' 3='high-school', 4='college and higher'	ns	Same
Age	.073**	Age recoded in four groups (18-35;36-50;51-65; over 65)	-.078*	Same
Rural	.089***	Localities below 20 000 inhabitants	--	Same
Male	ns	Sex of respondents; 1-Male; 0-other	ns	Same
Devout	ns	Scale from 1-does not attend; 1=once a month or seldom; 2=a few times a month; 3; few times a week; 4 –daily or almost daily	--	
Communist member		--	.061*	1-member of the former Communist party; 0-else
Follows politics	-55	Discuss politics with friends, from 1 (frequently) to 3 (never)	.133***	Index built as mean of scores for 'watch political news on TV', 'read political news in the press', 'discuss politics with friends'
Interested in politics	ns	Self-reported interest in politics, from 1 (maximum) to 4 (minimum)	--	
Ideology scale	ns	Scale from 1 to 10, left to right	--	
Collectivism	.054*	Scale from 1 to 10 with 10 maximum agreement that efforts should be made to equalize incomes	--	
Ideology irrelevant		--	.152***	Dichotomous variable, 1= the right-left distinction is declared irrelevant by the respondent; 0= the contrary
Transition frustrating		--	.179***	'Same people as during communism enjoy privileges' from 1 to 4 (maximum agreement) For analysis the variable was coded again with scores from –1 to +1, non-answers being coded with 0
Communism good idea		--	.110	"Communism good idea badly put into practice" (from 1=fully disagree to 4=fully agree)
Experts should run the country	.489	"We should have experts running the country, instead of political governments" (from 1=fully agree to 4=fully disagree)	--	"We should have experts running the country, instead of political governments" (from 1=fully agree to 4=fully disagree)

Source: I-WVS 1995; II- 2001. Legend: Figures are standardized regression coefficients (betas).
..*** significant at 0.000. ;** significant at 0.00; significant at <0.05-0.00.; ns- non-significant item.

Being a Christian Orthodox does not make one less likely to be a democrat when Romania is compared against the other countries and Christian Orthodoxy against other denominations in the pooled WVS sample, which confirms previous reports by Rose et al (1998), and Miller et al (1998). What discriminates between democrats and non-democrats is collectivism: the more an individual believes that incomes should be close and Communism was a good idea badly put into practice, the less likely is that he or she would protest if Parliament was abolished or would prefer a strong leader to elections.

Fig. 4. 'Hard' versus 'soft' explanations of democratic attitudes

Determinants	All	Democrats	Democracy-autocracy index	Scales used
Size of town	.204***	.173***	.137***	1-village; 8- large city
Subjective well being	.030**	.012	-.001	1-low; 6-high
Education	.078***	.096***	.109***	Age finished school
Christian Orthodox	-.005	.011	.009	Dichotomous. Orthodox 1, 0-else.
Age in years	-.046***	-.061***	-.065***	No of years

Source: World Values Survey pooled sample.

Legend: Dependent variables are:: ALL- ranged from nondemocrats to democrats, 1 to 4. (demoxx); DEMOCRATS- Committed democrats only, 1 to 4 (demox); Democracy-autocracy index with democrats the highest value.. Values are 'beta' standardized coefficients. *** means significant at 0.000. ;** significant at 0.00; * significant at <0.05-0.00.; ns- non-significant item.

The democrats grouped around the 'center' and 'center-right' positions, because they were the anticommunists: the antidemocrats were recruited from the 'left' (in fact, the former Communists) and, more interestingly, from those ruling out ideology as a useful cue for their political choice, who made the majority each time such an alternative was offered in a survey. Postcommunist socialization seems to work: the young and those who are

more exposed to information on politics are more democratic. Overall, it is the legacy of Communism which burdens the political transition, not other cultural factors, such as religion: and gradually, albeit slowly, it gives way. Learning progresses, as Rose et al (1998) have already remarked, and people grasp that elections are the only accountability tool they can use. In time, they are reluctant to give it away: over 90 % of Romanians defended in 2002 their right to elect the president directly when a proposal was made to amend the 1991 Constitution to turn the country in a full parliamentary democracy. Repeated surveys found that this issue, unlike many other political ones, was considered important, that a majority knew of the proposal and that most people strongly disliked it.

Political scientists have long been concerned to find if among political values some are 'core values', and to establish which are those for the Western civilization or the specific countries (see Feldman and Conover 1988 for a useful review of this topic). Manipulating WVS data from models explaining democracy to models predicting voting behavior it becomes clear the best discriminating question is the one asking for a choice between equality and freedom. These two values, the only political ones included in Milton Rokeach' values questionnaire are indeed essential for the understanding of postcommunist countries. If one knows this choice one can fairly predict in Romania if a person is a democrat or non-democrat, votes postcommunist or anticommunist, is nationalistic or pro-European. Collectivism is associated with nationalism, ethnocentrism and vote for postcommunist parties. It is East Europe's form of conservatism, a residual attitude grounded in Communism socialization, but also in some persisting institutional arrangements from Communist times. Those who are dependent on the state on practically every issue, from workers in the state industry to pensioners, especially the poor and less educated, are considerably higher on collectivism than the rest. Collectivism is a 'core' value because it helps predict most political orientations, and makes the backbone of an ideology by structuring internally consistent belief systems. Individuals high on collectivism regret good old Communist times, blame the difficult transition on the West or anticommunist parties and are high on social envy. It is the ideology by default, since most of those who prefer equality to freedom do not place themselves on the left-right ideological scale, declaring ideology is not important for their political choice. The competing couple, materialist/post-materialist values predict little to nothing in the

postcommunist world, mainly because most people are high on materialism and survival values. Indeed, this 'survivalism', often associated with a 'peasant' culture is so dominant in Romania that it makes a story in itself.

Peasants into citizens?

Politics in poor societies and weak states may look spectacular if observed from within. It usually contains a fair amount of coups and aborted revolutions, grand reforms and brutal assassinations. If observed from afar, however, it generates an almost unbearable feeling of monotony. Coups change only the person of the dictator; assassinations prove sooner or later to have been needless. Cities always push ahead for reform, rural areas push back for stagnation. Who rules the rural, rules the country, in the inspired formula of Samuel Huntington (1956: 292) Even the change of regimes, despite managing to produce considerable suffering, does not modify the essential constraints under which every government will operate sooner or later. In the case of Romania these constraints are summarized by Henry Roberts' brief formula: 'problems of an agrarian society', and have an adjacent ideology of their own: 'survivalism'. Indeed, inter-war thinkers of Romania defended this 'survival society' as an *alternative* form of civilization, not the absence of it:

„A minor culture, born out of improvisation and spontaneity, as well as from a total lack of will for eternity stands a better chance to last for thousands of years in its stillness...While a major culture, emerged from the thirst to defeat both space and time is, due to its dynamism, much more exposed to catastrophes and extinction..."(Blaga 1943).

The democratic change of 1989 brought about the revival of this intellectual movement praising traditional village life and the political ideals embodied in it. Its perfect symbol is the transformation of the museum of Communist Party in a Peasant Museum, in fact a monument dedicated to the ideology considering that 'peasant', 'Romanian' and 'Christian' are or must be synonyms. This ideology was remarkably salient throughout the Romanian 20th century, creating a 'paradox of the two villages', characterized by the contradiction between an 'ideal' village as imagined by intellectuals, seen as self-sufficient, both economically, culturally and politically, and a 'real'

village, poor and underdeveloped. The latter has been and is still the main constituency of predatory elites who live on state capture, a model very similar to the one described by Huntington or Joel Migdal for Latin America. Vertical accountability stops short of the village, where regardless of electoral campaigns villagers vote invariably conservatively, with the successor Communist party and Ion Iliescu. As Romania has 47% inhabitants residing in rural areas, and well over 35% *de facto* employed in agriculture, the 'peasant' culture is an important political subculture and its causes need detailed analysis. Voting behavior in the rural areas is indeed peculiar. 45% of the votes in rural areas were cast in 2000 and 1996 elections for the main 'successor' party of the Communist one, the Romanian Social Democrat party (formerly National Salvation Front, than Social Democratic Party) compared to 32% în the urban area. In the earlier elections of 1992 and 1990 the proportion of peasants voting with what they call 'the state', was even greater, alsmost twice the proportion of the urban areas. This share of the vote was affected by successive splits in the dominant party, which created confusion. In local elections, however, the same party is voted almost everywhere in the rural. The residence in rural areas has remained the main predictor of the vote for Ion Iliescu since 1990 till 2000 even in complex voting behavior models. Not all the rural is alike: the rural which displays the typical residual Communist attitudes is made of poorer areas in counties overwhelmingly rural with few and recent towns. In these areas, which had been fully collectivized until 1990, the vote is usually bargained between the central authority and the local one which acts as a 'gatekeeper' between the village and the rest of the world. This local authority controls access to every resource in the area, and is instrumental in making villagers vote uniformly with one party. In poor villages the vote is therefore practically collective, not individual, and part of the voters' indifference towards the ideology of a candidate is explained by the fact that ideology does indeed matter little. Equally, the organization of political life in the countryside supports this style of politics, as anticommunist parties have only exceptionally any headquarters, while the successor party is based in the village hall or another Communist time building. Models with all status variables also highlight the 'rural' as a consistent predictor of obedience ('Leaders should be followed even when wrong'), but not of every other authoritarian attitude. When examining political cognition we also find the rural considerably more ignorant than the urban (see Fig 5).

Fig. 5. Political literacy compared urban versus rural

Political information items	Urban	Rural
Follows electoral campaign daily in newspapers	23	14
One hour or more of campaign watched on TV the previous day (2000)	32	16
Matters greatly if a candidate satnds on the right or the left	9	5
Does not know if the left or the right stands for closer incomes	41	48
Does not know the left or the right favors private property	39	47

Source: 2000b.

Is 'authoritarianism' a rural or peasant intrinsic feature, or can we trace its other determinants? Comparison of the urban lifestyle and social indicators with the similar ones from rural Romania points instead to several other factors explaining the difference between urban and rural. Rural inhabitants make only about 60 % of the personal income of urban residents, they are older and less educated (see fig 6). As in the case of political cognition, not only the difference between the urban and the rural, but the general low level is a matter for concern. Poverty and lack of political information are worse by half in the rural areas compared to the urban ones, but the urban levels are also centuries away from developed Europe. As most of the 'urban' is a recent, incomplete Communist creation, the 'rural' may be even more broader than statistics show, going past beyond formal residence in the countryside.

Fig. 6. Rural-urban social indicators compared

Variables	Urban Mean (Standard error)	Rural Mean (Standard error)	Total population Mean (Standard error)
Age	44 (16)	49 (18)	46.34 (17.02)
Education	4.7 (1.4)	3.4 (1.3)	4.13 (1.50)
Personal income/month	40 Euro	21 Euro	30 Euro

Household income	65 Euro	42 Euro	54 Euro

Source: 2000b.

What we witness in Romania's rural area is therefore the political culture typical of underdevelopment. A large amount of literature on Romania's failure to catch up in the 20th century focuses on the lack of economic sustainability of small rural holdings, the so-called 'subsistence farming' (Mitranyi 1930; Roberts 1951). The dream of a prosperous peasantry on the Western model was undermined by a large surplus of agricultural population combined with a drop in productivity after the 1918-21 land reforms which destroyed great property. Nevertheless, some peasants had managed to gain some economic autonomy, if not prosperity, by 1945; to only end up either in the Gulag or the collective farms after the Soviet army imposed Communism. By 1989, except for mountainous regions where pastures make the only land available Romania was fully collectivized. A 1990 presidential decree and two land restitution acts, 1991 and 1997, have tried since to restore the 1945 property situation, creating over 600 000 land-related law suits by 1998. In any event, while failing to reconstitute the pre-Communist property, these acts managed to reconstitute the pre-Communism problem of smallholdings leading to subsistence farming (see Fig 7). Furthermore, the distribution of property empowered the local, Communist-time bureaucracy, who had both the archives and the legal power to decide over restitution matters and turned it into a veritable 'predatory elite'.

Fig. 7. Dimensions of rural property in historical comparison

Size in hectares	% 1918	% 1949	% 1999
Under 5	75	76.1	81.6
5-10	17.07	17.8	15.1
10-20 ha	5.49	4.89	3.1
Over 20	2.54	1.2	0.2
Total land available	3.280.000	3.067.000	3.211.507

Source: Encyclopaedia of Romania, Romanian Academy, Bucharest, 1939; Romanian National Statistics Office (CNS).

Other factors contributed as well to creating a model of political dependency of the peasantry, similar to the one before franchise was universalized. Among them are the persistence, even after decades of Communist industrialization, of an important overpopulation in agriculture; the lack of productivity, in over 50 % of holdings most works being carried with horses; the existence, for most of the transition, of a unique state agency with the legal right to buy the crops; the poverty and parochialism which cut the village from political information. In other words, formal institutions, old and recent, contribute to the voting behavior of the peasantry as well as to their political attitudes. Attitudes, in their turn, support these formal institutions, by not rebelling against them. This vicious circle creates a veritable 'black hole' of Romanian politics, where rules from the more modern urban areas do not apply in the countryside. The towns vote by watching electoral campaigns, from the radical right to the radical left, but mostly for the centre. The villages vote, in their words, 'for the state'. The 'party-state' was in opposition for four years, 1996-2000, following considerable urban mobilization, but not due to the peasants, who voted for Ion Iliescu in 1996 and 2000 alike, as they had already voted in 1990 and 1992.

It is not surprising that Ion Iliescu was identified with the 'state' at the countryside. He was the first leader to appear on television after the flight of Ceausescu and the one to hold the prime time most of the transition. He was associated with the return of household gardens confiscated by Ceausescu immediately in 1990. In focus groups peasants attribute to him all the gains of the 1989 Revolution and portray him as a positive paternal figure, a strong, balanced, reliable and non-corrupt politician. Most of them would prefer that he appoints a government of 'experts' who would 'administer' the country rather than 'govern' it. Party politics is seen as the source of all evils and corruption: electing directly a President who in his turn would appoint a non-political government is the ideal political system for the peasants. As it becomes clear Ion Iliescu will not enjoy a fourth term, local elites, from village hall clerks to priests, negotiate frenetically with possible successors, and polls in 2002-2003 show formidable rates of 'don't know' when asking political preferences in the rural area. What is predictable is that who manages to obtain the village elite gets the votes of the village.

Traditional and charismatic authority combined, are therefore prevailing in the rural society, as combinations of bureaucratic with charismatic authority had the upper hand in the communist one. Both rural and communist societies were however remote from the legal rational type found even in pre-modern societies on their way to capitalism. Both had unpredictable patterns of distributing social and legal rights from a rational standpoint, but fairly predictable for whoever is acquainted with the patterns of authority which generate unwritten rules of the game. *The widespread political behavior in such a context becomes therefore 'survival', understood as the quest to belong to the 'right 'status group, the group well connected with the source of power and authority, as benefits are centrally distributed still, be they pensions or land. This model was labeled as 'neo-traditionalimt' by Jowitt (1992); I prefer to call it 'neo-dependency', as more factors than one cause the political dependency, making the peasants a captive constituency. Marxist sociologist Henri Stahl, who lived under Communism, used to say in his private uncensored lectures that the Communist state has replaced the old time feudal as the main spoiler of the peasant. This formal arrangement, rendering the peasants landless and misers again after a brief interruption between the two world wars recreated the political dependence from before the vote was franchised.*

This model has not endured in the postcommunist urban areas and greater villages to such a large extent, because of new market relationships competing with it, even if it proved successful in slowing the market economy to become, in the words of the European Commission, 'fully functional'. In the simpler world of small villages, thrice as many in Romania as in Bulgaria or Poland, where no market exists, peasants live on subsistence farming and state pensions, this is how politics still works or rather does not work.

Predators into bureaucrats?

Figures of subjective corruption (how widespread corruption of the public sector is) confirm the anthropological model sketched in the previous section, as most Romanians perceive many groups are above the law, same few people are winners regardless of the regime and corruption is widespread. The last indicator does not single out Romania from the soon to

be European new members from the East (see *Fig. 8*) Perception of corruptions as widespread is high everywhere in the region.

Fig. 8. Perceptions of governance

	Interpersonal trust	Trust in political parties	Participation (attending lawful demonstration)	Civic membership	Corruption widespread
Czech R.	27	15	11	30	62
Slovakia	26	22	12	28	61
Poland	17	13	10	2	69
Hungary	22	20	9	31	42
Slovenia	15	14	9	31	68
Romania	18	14	20	31	58
Bulgaria	24	30	11	10	68

Source: WVS 1995

Romanians do not seem to differ on any governance-related indicators of public opinion, though objective data show Romanian governments as more corrupt and ineffectual (Mungiu-Pippidi 2002). In a general regional picture of distrust, Romanians are insignificantly below the regional average in their distrust in fellow humans and political parties, have higher rates of participation in voluntary associations (although this is based on a high membership rate in unions inherited from Communist times) and attend protest rallies more often than anybody else. In no way is Romania an exceptional culture where passivity reigns and structural distrust plagues collective action, so Wildafsky's argument can be ruled out. True, differences between participation rates, trust or civic membership, are considerable compared to Western European countries, but fairly typical for postcommunist ones. It is therefore likely that the influence of Communist socialization, not some specific Romanian cultural trait, is accountable. Regardless if Catholic or Orthodox, East European countries are struggling

with widespread malfunction of the administration, translated into the incapacity to provide satisfactory service without an extra-tax made by the bribe, a form of abuse of taxpayers. All these countries have underpaid civil servants, public resources in short supply preserved as such by over-regulation, citizens used to being mistreated and an almost total absence of formal institutions of accountability of the civil service- other than those making bureaucrats accountable to the upper hierarchy. There is something remarkable about Romania, however, that the index of Transparency International, also a subjective index, but made by perceptions of businessmen rather than ordinary people, reveal its administration and politics as more corrupt than its Central European neighbors. The Freedom House Nations in Transit index of corruption also points to the predatory elite hidden in the Romanian bureaucracy. This institutional 'culture' is not met passively by consumers - only 34% of Romanians believe changing this state of affairs is beyond their power - but proves resilient due to the absence of a policy to dismantle the formal institutions supporting it. Citizens pay an extra-tax because it is simpler to solve matters than fight the system. But there is a cost to this: trust in the new formal institutions of democracy is eroded.

Not only do most Romanians (62%) report having been mistreated by a civil servant after the fall of Communism, but those who grant a favorable judgment to civil servants, judges and politicians are below a third of the total if we average the figures of the past decade. The majority of Romanians have come to be democrats, but blame their difficult transition on their political 'class' (see *Fig. 9*).

Fig. 9. Dissatisfied democrats

Questions	% agree
If Parliament was closed down and parties abolished, would you...	19.4
A unity government with only the best people should replace government by elected politicians	59.2
Conflict on between political class and rest of Romanians	51

Failed transition blamed on incompetent governments	62

Source: 2001

The recruitment method of politicians and bureaucrats may account for their low popularity. Representatives are elected on party lists, the government appoints judges and the civil servants' body is a mixture from the Communist time bureaucracy and the new recruits. Public advertisings of job openings in the public sector is absent as a general rule, and one can obtain a job as a civil servant by informal connections only. Politicization of the administration runs deep, less from political interest in these low-key jobs, than the political parties' need to support their wide range of cronies.

Even if comparable with figures of the regions as a whole, public trust figures remain very low. People distrust their 'state', still perceived, as in Communist times, as a parallel entity to society, and institutional social capital is low. Citizens have not yet come to claim ownership of the state, from local government to Parliament, even if they participate regularly in electing these institutions. Once elected, those seem to resume operating alongside society, rather than with it. Trust depends on performance and improves with it - trust in urban local governments doubled in Romania between 1994 and 2000, as fiscal decentralization gradually empowered mayors, who are directly elected, to start satisfying their constituencies. It remains low for central government, law and order agencies, Parliament and parties, which are placed further from the voters' reach, protected by the intricacies of a proportional electoral system based on party lists.

Determining public trust in all its variants- trust in government, in specific public agencies, and in the 'state' in general confirms this picture (see Fig. 10). Trust is lower in urban than rural areas, the opposite of what we would expect if trust was a basic psychological orientation arising out of an environment of scarce resources. This finding is consistent in all surveys and runs contrary to classic social capital literature, such as Almond and Verba or Putnam. It makes sense, however: urbanites distrust more because they bribe more. Peasants barely bribe: being cashless, they just let themselves abused, without neither bribing, nor protesting.

The relation between interpersonal trust and trust in public sector or state trust does exist, but it explains little of the variance. Interpersonal trust does not, however, determine political trust. On the contrary, pure performance items, such as the personal experience of a citizen in dealing with the administration influences public trust greatly.

Fig. 10. Determinants of public trust

Predictors	STATE	GOVT	PUBLIC SECTOR	Wording and scales
Education	*ns*	*ns*	*ns*	1='primary' 2='elementary and vocational' 3='high-school', 4='college and higher'
Wealth	*ns*	*ns*	*ns*	Factor score from the average household income and the total number of household utilities
Age	*ns*	*-0.082 **	*- 0.108 ***	Respondent's age in years
Town size	*-0.043 **	*-0.072 **	*-0.073 **	1=village; 2=town under 30 000 inhabitants; 3- town 30 000-100 000 inhabitants; 4= town 100 000-200 000; 5=town over 200 000 inhabitants
Male	*ns*	*ns*	*ns*	Respondent's gender (1=male)
Subjective welfare	*0.105 **	*0.226 **	*0.181**	Satisfaction with life from 1= 'not satisfied at all' to 4='very satisfied'; for analysis the variable was coded again with scores from –1 to +1, non-answers being coded with 0
Interpersonal trust	*0.129 ****	*0.037*	*0.141***	'Most people can be trusted' scale ranging from 1 (total disagreement) to 4 (total agreement)
Follows politics in the media	*0.128 **	*0.062*	*0.066*	Index built as mean of scores for 'watch political news on TV', 'read political news in the press', 'discuss politics with friends'
Civic membership	*0.093*	*0.049*	*-0.056*	Dichotomous variable, 1=member voluntary association, 0= non-member
Communism good idea	*-0.127 **	*-0.242 **	*0.066*	"Communism good idea badly put into practice" (from 1=fully disagree to 4=fully agree)
Mistreated by a civil servant after 1989	*-0.137 **	*-0.215 **	*-0.317 ***	Experience with mistreatment by public servants after 1989, 1 yes, o no
Adjusted R²	0.137	0.193	0.102	

Source: 2000 Legend: Figures are non-standardized regression coefficients. ..*** significant at 0.000. ;** significant at 0.00; significant at <0.05-0.00.; ns- non-significant item. Dependent variables are trust in state (STATE) from 1 (little) to 4 (a lot); trust in government (GOVT) - factor score of evaluations of Government, Parliament and Presidency; scales from 1 (little) to 4 (a lot); trust public sector (PUBLIC SECTOR) - factor score of evaluations for main public agencies, scales from 1 (little) to 4 (a lot).

Residual Communist attitudes also hinder institutional social capital. The more people are frustrated with the transition and regret Communism, the

less trust they grant to the new regime. The young tend to be more confident than the old, and subjective welfare rather than objective differences in income boost social capital. Members in voluntary associations are not higher on social capital than no-members. And overall, those who had negative encounters with some civil servant- who make roughly 60 % of the population- are low on public trust. Mistreatment is generally interpreted as a signal to deliver the payment to the civil servant or public official, as reported bribe and reported abuse by administration are correlated. As a general rule, people bribe because without this extra-tax they would hardly get anything they need, and in Romania the dependency on the administration for an array of permits and licenses is still much larger than in the West. Excepted are those belonging to the right network, having the right connection, which can turn the impersonal relationship with the administration into a personal one. For Romania, roughly a quarter of the respondents enjoy this status. The likeliness that those will get the service they require in a satisfactory manner is considerably higher than for the group which has no 'connections', even if it pays the bribe.

The formal and informal institutions regulating administrative practice support ongoing corruption. Their origins are in Communist times. Despite its strongly modernizing discourse, the Communist administration was the opposite of a modern administration. Arbitrary and discriminative, it could not have been further from the impartiality, impersonality and fairness supposed to characterize modern bureaucracies. The corruption of the Romanian civil service manifests itself often not just by use of a public position to seek personal gain, but more broadly as the widespread infringement of the norm of impersonality and fairness which should characterize modern public service. Providing discriminative public service as a general rule is not prompted by financial gain only, being rather the norm in societies dominated by groups of uneven power status. And these differences in power status are inherited from the recent past. In polls, all Eastern Europeans seem discontent with the quality of their administration and political class: in practice, when we examine the situation more closely there is a clear correlation between the degree of communization and the quality of administration, corruption entailed. The more intrusive the Communist regime, the greater was the arbitrary power of its agents, such as representatives of the administration, and the lower their accountability.

Institutional reforms did not target this situation specifically: civil service reform acts prompted by the European Commission include practically no reward and punishment system to promote a change of administrative culture, so they are unlikely to solve the 'hard' cases, such as Romania or Russia. How many years can the public function alongside predatory elites that no government seems willful enough or powerful enough to shake off? The reform of the public administration, and of the state in general, is the key to legitimating democracy and to European accession of Romania. The central group of postcommunist politicians, such as Ion Iliescu, has gradually evolved from authoritarian socialists to pro-European social-democrats, but they did not dare to attack corruption, as the predatory elite is the most influential part of their power basis. This is an essential step, however, to complete Romania's transformation and it is unlikely European accession can be achieved without it taken.

Conclusions

1. The role of 'hard' constraints

'Hard' constraints for the development of democracy are legacies that cannot be modified by human agency in the space of one generation. Two historical 'structural' legacies were proved to matter in this analysis: underdevelopment (the ratio rural/urban) and the depth of penetration by the Communist regime of the Romanian society (one useful proxy is party membership). There is a causal link among them as well. Communism dared more in poorer societies, where underdevelopment provided the necessary alibi for strong social intervention. The extreme poverty of Romanian villages inspired Ceausescu's design to 'systematize' them, a reform supposed to eliminate a half, turn into towns a tenth and rebuild the rest. To increase the share of the urban and modernize by such radical policy would have been unconceivable in the Czech Republic, which was very urbanized already, but seemed at least in theory to answer a real need in Romania. To impose collective farming where many farms were obviously productive as in Poland was also more difficult than to do so where 'subsistence farming' was the rule and the debates surrounding it had ended in radical proposals even before Communism. And, naturally, this deep penetration was possible due to the insignificant 10 % Western interest in Romania scribbled by Winston Churchill on what he himself called 'a nasty scrap of paper'. Conservative

peasants resisted in the mountains for almost ten years until they were all executed, arrested or deported, in the aftermath of the failed Hungarian Revolution, when it became clear the West will not stop the sovietization of Romania (Seton-Watson 1960). Over 80 000 peasants were arrested to prompt collectivization only, not to speak of overt peasants' resistance, which was crushed in blood. Only after their elites were completely destroyed and their lands and arms were confiscated, have Romanian peasants resorted to James C. Scott's 'weapons of the weak', such as cheating the collective farm, not before. And only after the young had deserted the villages and the old had barely survived the menace of 'systematization' was their political dependence complete to show in postcommunist times. Other useful proxies of depth of penetration by the regime are extent of collectivization and the number of dissidents by 1989. Because, also under 'Communist legacies', the destruction by a repression worse than in Central European countries of every political alternative also accounts for a postcommunist transition with a dominant party and a dominant, father-like politician.

2. The role of 'soft' constraints

'Soft constraints' are formal institutions which can be changed (such as a poor electoral law), informal institutions and opinions which run counter to democracy. They are also legacies, but they can change and they have changed. We need to examine them in connection in this tripartite model to identify the possible windows of opportunity for policy intervention. If we would examine public opinion only, the Romanian rural and its voting behavior, as well as the administrative corruption, would remain something of a mystery.

Nevertheless, the importance of soft constraints is also directly determined by the nature of the former Communist regime. Informal institutions have multiplied and took the upper hand in collective behavior due to the absurdity of formal arrangements during Communism. In 1989 all Romanians were culprits, as it was illegal to store more than one kilo of sugar in one's house, have a garden without producing wheat, drive one's car every weekend, and so forth. The society's habit to survive by going around laws is a serious obstacle to instauration of the rule of law, especially since corruption at the top remains high, law enforcement collapsed with

Ceausescu and the new legislation is often poor, removing therefore any incentives for law abiding.

In regard to electoral democracy things are considerably simpler: postcommunist socialization works, so even individuals with an average interest in politics have learned that elections are the rule of the game. The number of collectivists and authoritarians decreases year after year: similarly, the number of those who believed Romanians and Hungarians are in conflict has gradually eroded and had fallen under 40% by 2000 after a majority shared this perception in 1990. The main problems for democratization remain the underdevelopment and political dependency in the poor rural areas, as well as the difficulty to create and consolidate political organizations, both ,hard constraints'. Residual Communist attitudes, which vary across East Europe, also because they are determined by the nature of former regimes, change with the new socialization and prosperity of successful economic transitions, even if success is mild. The longer time needed by countries which experienced worse national Communist regimes, such as Romania, Bulgaria and Russia is a remember of the fact that socialization works both ways: longer and harder Communist regimes were also successful in perverting majorities to approve of one party systems and fostering social envy. The socialization means they used, however, was state terror. By contrast with this coercive persuasion, the transition, with its European integration as a main incentive and antidemocratic parties allowed to compete in the electoral game has turned out fairly well.

3. Cultural legacies or institutional reproduction?

Political culture of the transition is a mix of residual attitudes and recent ones, inherited formal institution and continuous internalization of new norms. The only meaning to 'cultural legacies' is at the level of informal institutions are refer to the recent heritage of Communism. The pre-war bureaucracies of Romania and Bulgaria were almost completely destroyed by the Communist regime, yet the regime in the late seventies showed already the same patrimonial character as the pre-war bureaucracy. This induced some observers to believe that 'cultural' characteristics have prevailed over the change of regime, while in fact similar contexts (big governments with low or no accountability) tend to reproduce the same features regardless of 'culture'.

We can clearly identify, as in the example of rural property, the persistence or recreation of formal institutions, which reproduce the same informal ones, creating the false feeling of 'continuity'. Those who doubt that imports of institutions are possible, from inter-war Romanian fascist thinkers to European enlargement skeptics of today should seek the causes of institutions failing to take root in the area of implementation policies rather than 'culture'. Because culture is reduced to public opinion, it changes faster and easier than institutions do. True enough, the Communist constitutional order collapsed overnight in Romania; but only because it was supported by heavy repression and a Cold War context. Once these vanished, most Communist formal institutions disappeared. Exceptional moments like this, prompted by outside factors and a minority from within, should be removed from this discussion of political change: they make the exception, not the rule. A transition dominated by predatory elites due to an unfinished power struggle between an old entrenched elite and an almost inexistent new one was more in the logic of Ceausescu's repressive Romania than was the beautiful and radical Revolution week. Illusions of the first day of December 22, 1989, when thousands of youngsters invaded Ceausescu's palace, were proven naive: occasional mobilization cannot escape catching up by a country's past. But neither can the past of a country ground it in a different path than the region and the times, even if it affects the pace of its transformation. Difficult history matters, but it is not inescapable.

References:

Almond, Gabriel and Sidney Verba (1963) *The Civic Culture*. Princeton: Princeton University Press

Barrington Moore, jr. (1966) Social Origins of Dictatorship and Democracy, Boston: Beacon Press

von Beyme, Klaus (1996).*Transition to democracy in Eastern Europe.* New York: St. Martin's Press

Blaga, Lucian (1943) 'The Permanence of Prehistory', in *Saeculum*, 9-10, quoted in Chimet, Iordan (1991) *Dreptul la memorie*, vol. IV, Bucuresti: Albatros, p.143

Bunce, Valerie (1999). "The Political Economy of Postsocialism" Slavic Review Winter 1999. 58: 4

Conradt, David P. (1980) "Changing German Political Culture" in Gabriel Almond and Sidney Verba *The Civic Culture Revisited.* Newbury Park: Sage

Feldman, Stanley (1983) 'Structure and Consistency in Public Opinion: the Role of Core Beliefs and Values' *American Political Science Review* (APSR) 32: 2

Fischer, Ellen Mary (ed) (1996) *Establishing Democracies*. Boulder, Colorado: Westview

Fuchs, Dieter (1998) 'The Democratic Culture of United Germany' in Pippa Norris (ed) *Critical Citizens: Global Support of Democratic Governance.* Oxford: Oxford University Press

Hofstede, Geert with W. Arrindell (1998) *Masculinity and femininity : the taboo dimension of national cultures.* Thousand Oaks, California : Sage Publications

Gelman, Vladimir (2001) 'Post-Soviet Transitions and Democratization: Towards Theory-Building ' Paper presented at the 29th European Consortium of Political Research Joint Session of Workshops, Grenoble, 6-11 April 2001

Huntington, Samuel 1956. Political order in changing societies, New Haven: Yale University Press

Huntington, Samuel (1993) "The Clash of Civilizations," *Foreign Affairs*, 72: 3, pp 30-31.

Inglehart, Ronald (1997) *Modernization and Post-Modernization: Cultural, Economic and Political Change in 43 societies.* Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press

Janos, Andrew (1993) 'Modernization and Decay in Historical Perspective. The case of Romania', in Jowitt 1993 pp 72-116.

Jowitt, Kenneth (1992) New World Disorder or the Leninist Extinction. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Jowitt, Kenneth (1993). *Social Change in Romania.1860-1940.* Berkeley: University of California, Institute for International Studies

Kaplan, Robert D. (1994) Balkan Ghosts: A Journey Through History. New York : St. Martin's Press

Kennan George F. (1996) *At a Century's Ending: Reflections*, 1982-1995, W. W. Norton and Company, New York and London

Kitshelt, Herbert (2001) 'Post-Communist Economic Reform. Causal Mechanism and Concomitant Properties', paper presented at PSA Annual Meeting, San Francisco

Linz, Juan and A. Stepan (1996) *Problems of Democratic Transition and Consolidaton: Southern Europe, South America and Post-Communist Europe.* Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press

de Melo, Martha and C.Denizer, A.Gelb and S. Tenev (1997) *Circumstance and Choice. The Role of Initial Conditions and Policies in Transition Economies.* World Bank Working Paper

Miller, W. L., S. White and P. Heywood (1998) *Values and Political Change in Post-Communist Europe.* Basingstoke: Macmillan

Mishler, William and R. Rose (l997) 'Trust, Distrust and Skepticism: Popular Evaluation of Civil and Political Institutions in Post-Communist Societies', *Journal of Politics* 59: 418-451.

Mitranyi, David. (1930) *The Land and the Peasant in Rumania: the War and Agrarian Reform, 1917-1921.* London: Oxford University Press.

Mungiu, Alina (1996) *Die Rumanen nach '89.* Resita: Friederich Ebert Stiftung

Mungiu-Pippidi, A. (2002), *Threats and Challenges. Romania after 2000*, Bucharest: UNDP and Polirom, chapter 2, 'Politics'

North, Douglas C. (1990), *Institutions, Institutional Change and Economic Performance.* New York: Cambridge University Press

Plasser, Fritz and A. Pribersky (1996) *Political Culture in East Central Europe.* Aldershot: Avebury

Putnam, Robert D. et al (1995) *Making Democracy Work* Princeton: Princeton University Press

Roberts, Henry. (1951) R*umania. The politics of an agrarian state.* New Haven: Yale University Press

Rokeach, Milton (1973) *The Nature of Human Value.s* New York: Free Press

Rose, Richard, W. Mishler and C. Haerpfer (1998) *Democracy and Its Alternatives: Understanding Post-Communist Societie.s* Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press

Shafir, Michael (1985) *Romania, Politics, Economics and Society: Political Stagnation and Stimulated Change,* New York: Printer Publishers Ltd.

Schopflin, George (1991) 'The Political Tradition of Eastern Europe' in Graubard, Steven R (ed) *Eastern Europe? Central Europe? Europe.* Boulder: Westview

Scott, James C. (1986) *Weapons of the Weak: Everyday Forms of Peasant Resistance.* Yale: University Press.

Seton-Watson, Hugh (1960) Th*e Pattern of Communist Revolution. A Historical Analysis.* London: Methuen et co.

Wildafsky, Aaron (1987) 'Choosing Preferences by Constructing Institutions: A Cultural Theory of Preference Formation', APSR, 81: 1

Note on surveys

The surveys used are: World Values Survey 1995-2000, polled by ICCV in Romania in 1993; surveys quoted by year (2000a, 2000b, 2001) were all executed by the Center for Urban Sociology (CURS). Surveys 2000a and 2001 were national surveys on samples of 1100 each; 2000b was a special survey, designed to be representative for every region, with a sample of 37 400 respondents. 2001 was a joint survey by Eurobarometer and United Nations Development Program (UNDP). 2000a and 2001 were sponsored by Freedom House and UNDP and designed by the author.