

2006

# Unseen Obstacles to Democratic Consolidation The Case of Romania

Andrea Florescu

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholarship.shu.edu/theses>

---

## Recommended Citation

Florescu, Andrea, "Unseen Obstacles to Democratic Consolidation The Case of Romania" (2006). *Theses*. 85.  
<https://scholarship.shu.edu/theses/85>

# **Unseen Obstacles to Democratic Consolidation**

## **The Case of Romania**

by

Andreea Florescu

August 3, 2006

Advisor: Professor Yanzhong Huang, PhD  
Reader: Professor Yinan He, PhD

**The John C. Whitehead School of Diplomacy and International Relations**

**Seton Hall University**

**Abstract:**

This paper is a case-study regarding Romania's protracted democratic consolidation. In it, I propose an individual-centered, bottom-up explanation of the pace and outcome of democratic consolidation, as opposed to the usual top-down, elite-driven explanations proposed by the literature. I suggest that the process of democratization is closely related to the social psychology of a people, which may slow down or accelerate consolidation. I argue that Romania's democracy continues to be semi-consolidated more than fifteen years after its transition from communism because, unlike many other transition societies in Central and Eastern Europe, the Romanian public lacked an understanding (social representation) of the meaning of democracy and its rules in 1989. As a result, people in Romania did not know how to behave in ways consistent to democracy and embraced democratic norms and behavior reluctantly and incompletely. I claim that this state of things continues to this date, with modest improvements. The case of Romania was selected because this country is an outlier in the region from many points of view. Comparisons are drawn between Romania and Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, Russia, and Slovakia.

**Key words:**

Democracy, democratization, democratic consolidation, social psychology, attitudes, political culture, society, individual, Central and Eastern Europe, Romania.

## **Acknowledgments**

I would like to thank my advisor, Professor Yanzhong Huang, who guided this thesis with grace and patience, and provided extremely useful advice, and to Professor Yinan He, who read the paper and offered valuable suggestions for improvement. While writing the original Master's research project, upon which the thesis was built, I was fortunate to benefit from sharp, constructive guidance of my initial steps by Professor Margarita Balmaceda. I also wish to thank the faculty and administrators at the Whitehead School of Diplomacy and International Relations, who provided me with invaluable knowledge and a warm environment, and especially Dean Courtney Smith, who was very supportive of my efforts. Prior to the Whitehead School, Professors Caroline Hartzell and Robert Bohrer in the Political Science department at Gettysburg College inspired me to further my knowledge of international relations and comparative politics.

I am deeply grateful to my parents, Cintia and Viorel Florescu, who have nurtured and supported me for the past twenty-five years, and continue to believe in me. Finally, I extend many thanks to those friends who read drafts, encouraged me along the way, and offered their ideas for this and future research: Rustom Davar, Caroline Pacht, Professor Robert Manley, Carmen Ghiran, Andrea Schierbaum, Susan Malcolm, and Daniel Cox.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>INTRODUCTION</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>CHAPTER I: Premises</b>	<b>5</b>
Research Questions and Their Policy Significance	5
Democratic Consolidation—From Institutions to Attitudes	8
Organization of the Paper	13
<b>CHAPTER II: A New Look at Democratic Consolidation—The Case of Romania</b>	<b>15</b>
A Different Perspective	15
Case Selection and the Dependent Variable	19
<b>CHAPTER III: A Social Psychological Explanation for Romania’s Protracted Transition</b>	<b>25</b>
A New Independent Variable: The Mindset	25
Inside the ‘Mind’ of Romanian Society	30
<b>CHAPTER IV: Romanians’ Mindset in Comparative Perspective</b>	<b>35</b>
<b>CHAPTER V: Analysis and Conclusion</b>	<b>42</b>
Conclusion	48
<b>BIBLIOGRAPHY</b>	<b>51</b>

## TABLES AND CHARTS

Table 1. Democratization Scores—Former Communist States in Europe and Central Asia	3
Table 2. CEE Countries Compared	20
Chart 1. Opinions about Democracy as a Political System	37
Chart 2. Opinions about Institutions	38
Chart 3. Opinions about a Market Economy	39
Chart 4. Opinions about Undemocratic Regime Types	40
Chart 5. Correlation between the Dependent and Independent Variables	41

## INTRODUCTION

On November 28, 2004, less than a month before the 15<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Romanian Revolution of 1989, Traian Basescu, candidate of the Justice and Truth Alliance (JTA, a center-right coalition) narrowly defeated incumbent Prime Minister Adrian Nastase (Social Democratic Party, SDP) in the fifth competition for the country's presidency since the fall of communism. Perhaps due to the closeness of the Romanian presidential election to the presidential and parliamentary elections in neighboring Ukraine, and the electoral "color" of the winning Romanian and Ukrainian coalitions (orange), both of which defeated leftist governments, the changes of government in the two countries bore a striking similarity to each other. Despite marked differences between the two countries,<sup>1</sup> and the different democracy scores assigned to them by Freedom House International—Romania had been labeled as 'free' since 1996, while Ukraine remained only 'partly free' in 2004—large portions of their citizenry as well as international commentators seemed to regard the election results as momentous for these countries' history. In Ukraine, the triumph of Viktor Iushchenko and his Our Ukraine coalition was even described as the "orange revolution."

If Iushchenko's victory was indeed momentous for Ukraine, which had made rather modest strides toward democracy under Russia's influence, why would Romania's new government be expected to effect a major change in the direction the country was going? This was the fifth free election for Romania since 1989, so the country had been considered an electoral democracy since the early 1990s. It had joined NATO and was expected to join the European Union in 2007. In many respects, its path had been similar to that of Bulgaria,

---

<sup>1</sup> Romania's economy is in better shape than the Ukrainian one, and it is much closer to the goal of European integration than its Eastern neighbor. The countries' recent history is also different—Ukraine was part of the USSR, while Romania was not.

its neighbor to the South, which had also experienced a very repressive personal dictatorship and had emerged out of communism with a slower progress toward a market economy and lower per capita GDP than the other former communist countries that had already joined the EU. However similar their development, studies have consistently placed Bulgaria a little higher on a continuum of democratic consolidation than Romania. Most recently, the 2006 *Nations in Transit* report by Freedom House places Bulgaria in the ‘consolidated democracy’ category and Romania, in the ‘semi-consolidated democracy’ category.<sup>2</sup> Romania shares its unenviable spot in the report with Albania (one of Europe’s poorest countries), Croatia, Macedonia, Montenegro, and Serbia, which have been involved in a civil war over the past decade. The other countries from the former Warsaw Pact are either consolidated democracies or non-democratic regimes, ranging from hybrid/transitional to consolidated autocracies.<sup>3</sup> Table 1 summarizes the 2006 Freedom House ratings for civil and political liberties for the former communist states in Europe and Central Asia, as assigned in the 2006 *Nations in Transit* report.

---

<sup>2</sup> 2006 *Nations in Transit Report*, Freedom House, 2006, available at <http://www.freedomhouse.org/research/>.

<sup>3</sup> All of the eight new EU members are consolidated democracies. Bosnia-Herzegovia, Georgia, Moldova, and Ukraine are categorized as hybrid/transition regimes, and Belarus, Russia, and all Central Asian republics (with the exception of Georgia) are semi-consolidated or consolidated authoritarian regimes.

**Table 1. Democratization Scores—Former Communist States in Europe and Central Asia**

COUNTRY	NATIONS IN TRANSIT SCORE 2006	CATEGORY
Slovenia	1.75	Consolidated democracy
Estonia	1.96	Consolidated democracy
Slovakia	1.96	Consolidated democracy
Hungary	2.00	Consolidated democracy
Latvia	2.07	Consolidated democracy
Poland	2.14	Consolidated democracy
Lithuania	2.21	Consolidated democracy
Czech Republic	2.52	Consolidated democracy
Bulgaria	2.96	Consolidated democracy
Romania	3.39	Semi-consolidated democracy
Croatia	3.71	Semi-consolidated democracy
Serbia/Montenegro	3.71/3.89	Semi-consolidated democracy
Albania	3.79	Semi-consolidated democracy
Macedonia	3.82	Semi-consolidated democracy
Bosnia-Herzegovina	4.07	Transitional/hybrid regime
Ukraine	4.21	Transitional/hybrid regime
Georgia	4.86	Transitional/hybrid regime
Moldova	4.96	Transitional/hybrid regime
Armenia	5.14	Semi-consolidated authoritarian regime
Kyrgyzstan	5.68	Semi-consolidated authoritarian regime
Russia	5.75	Semi-consolidated authoritarian regime
Azerbaijan	5.93	Semi-consolidated authoritarian regime
Tajikistan	5.93	Semi-consolidated authoritarian regime
Kazakhstan	6.39	Consolidated authoritarian regime
Belarus	6.71	Consolidated authoritarian regime
Uzbekistan	6.82	Consolidated authoritarian regime
Turkmenistan	6.96	Consolidated authoritarian regime

Source: Freedom House International, *Nations in Transit 2006*

This paper seeks to provide an explanation for Romania’s exceptionalism. After a dictatorship unlike any other in the region, its transition from communism to democracy in 1989 was the only violent one. Today, it continues to stand out as a semi-consolidated democracy—its institutional and legal framework ought to ensure a working democratic regime, but democracy is still not “the only game in town.” The separation of powers is incomplete, with the presidency, the cabinet of ministers, and the Parliament struggling for power, while a less-than-independent judiciary continues to be inefficient. Electronic media,



as well as some civil society organizations are still under the influence of the government, other political entities, or strong economic interests. Finally, corruption is widespread and has penetrated Romanian society to such an extent that Romanians are unable and unwilling to engage freely in a system of “institutionalized uncertainty”<sup>4</sup> which characterizes consolidated democracies and to enjoy the rule of law.

Many competing explanations have been provided for a lack of democratic consolidation, and of these, some have been applied to the case of Romania. For the most part, these explanations focus on elites as agents of change. In this paper, I overview the factors which, according to the existing literature on democratic consolidation, affect the timing and quality of consolidation. Explanations generally focus on the role of elites and take a top-down, systemic approach to democratization. Though many such explanations may apply to Romania, I suggest an alternative approach to understanding its protracted democratization. It focuses on individuals and provides a bottom-up, social psychological explanation of the process of democratic consolidation, which may well be applicable to other cases. I argue that, insofar as democracy can be learned and depends on the popular psyche, Romanians have failed to fully embrace democracy (along with its values and behavior norms) from a psychological point of view. This provides a solid alternative explanation for the country’s failure to democratize fully.

---

<sup>4</sup> Adam Przeworski’s succinct definition of democracy is widely used in the literature on democratization. Przeworski, Adam, “Some Problems in the Study of Transition to Democracy,” in Guillermo O’Donnell, Philippe Schmitter, and Laurence Whitehead, eds., *Transitions from Authoritarian Rule: Comparative Perspectives* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1986).

## **CHAPTER I**

### **PREMISES**

#### **RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND THEIR POLICY SIGNIFICANCE**

In the democratic transition literature, the term used to describe strong new democracies as opposed to new democracies whose path to freedom is still uncertain is consolidation. Based on the widely different stages of democracy building in countries transitioning from authoritarian rule to democracy, a vast segment of democratization literature has been dedicated to the idea of consolidation. In addition to debates about the meaning of consolidation, the most important questions that arise are: why are some countries more successful than others in consolidating their democracies and what can be done to accelerate/improve the likelihood of consolidation in those countries where it has not yet occurred?

If we presuppose that democracy is desirable for all countries and at all times, establishing which factors promote and which prevent consolidation is particularly important for predicting outcomes of incipient democracies today and of those that states that may undergo transitions to democracy in the future. In addition to their predictive value, such factors also have significant policy consequences—those affecting democratization in positive ways may be replicated elsewhere, and those affecting it negatively can serve as lessons as to what to avoid or do better in the future. For example, if foreign aid is found to have accelerated democratic consolidation in a significant number of cases, it may be advisable to provide aid to fledgling democracies; by contrast, if widespread corruption has prevented democracies from consolidating, then governments of new democracies may be

more careful and take measures to curtail the spread of corruption in their respective countries.

Successful waves of democratization have helped define some of the factors that are conducive to or detract from democratic consolidation. Consequently, the literature on democratic consolidation has expanded. Some of the findings of existing literature on this topic are underlined below. Many of the factors considered to be affecting consolidation are institutional or systemic in nature; these include (but are certainly not limited to) national elites, party systems, the level of economic development, foreign aid, etc. This paper addresses the issue of consolidation building on characteristics of individuals rather than characteristics of the system. It employs the case of democratic transition in Romania to offer a new perspective on why consolidation may be delayed or not occur at all.

This study thus seeks to shed light on much narrower (by contrast with those stated above) questions regarding consolidation: can we look at the individual level in order to find motives for the presence or (in Romania's case) absence of consolidation, and, if the first answer is affirmative, what is it about the Romanian people that has hindered the process of democratic consolidation in this country? I find that it is legitimate to turn to the individual level in search of answers regarding Romania's delayed consolidation, and I propose an explanation rooted in social psychology and political culture for the lack of active citizen sponsorship of democratic consolidation in Romania. Where appropriate, I compare the evolution of democratic transition and psychological factors that have shaped democracy in Romania to the evolution of democratic transition and psychological/mentality factors in other Central and Eastern European countries and primarily in Bulgaria and Poland.

In brief, the central question at hand is whether the shared psychology of individuals in post-communist states can play a significant role in these countries' consolidation process. This question will be analyzed in the context of Romania's laggard democratic consolidation. It can be inscribed in a larger search for a more complete and nuanced understanding of democratic consolidation and democratization. Can a democracy be considered complete if citizens have yet to adopt democratic attitudes and mentalities? Is there even a chance that a true liberal democracy will flourish in the absence of democratic values and beliefs?

Answers to these questions shed light on the consolidation process in Romania and on possible ways of improving it. In addition, adding a social psychological/cultural dimension to democratization may prove useful when dealing with established or new topics such as democratic peace, terrorism, the clash of civilizations, or the growing interdependence that characterizes the world today. Again, considering that the spread of democracy is desirable, and, according to some, inevitable, it would be both interesting and useful to take the social psychological/cultural characteristics of citizens of potential new democracies into account. Further questions thus take shape. Are there any psychological/cultural traits of societies needing to democratize that prevent them from doing so? If so, how realistic is the prospect of democratization in these countries? Can we speak of a clash of mentalities and political cultures between democracies and non-democracies? These are only a few of the larger questions my proposed approach to democratic consolidation brings forward.

The remainder of this chapter is dedicated to an overview of the existing literature on democratic consolidation. I will use Samuel P. Huntington's seminal work, *The Third Wave: Democratization in the Twentieth Century* in order to introduce the theoretical framework of democratization and the concept of democratic consolidation. Departing from Huntington's

work, I will then present alternative definitions of consolidation and some competing explanations for its success or lack of success. Finally, I will explore the literature on democratic consolidation in Central and Eastern Europe and Romania in particular.

#### **DEMOCRATIC CONSOLIDATION—FROM INSTITUTIONS TO ATTITUDES**

The literature on democratization offers several meanings for democratic consolidation. A minimalist view is that democracies are consolidated after power has been peacefully turned over from one political group to another after two free and fair elections. Known as the two-turnover test, the concept of electoral democracy appears in Samuel P. Huntington's *The Third Wave: Democratization in the Late Twentieth Century*.<sup>5</sup> Freedom House outlines four basic conditions that need to be met for a country to be considered an electoral democracy: (1) have a competitive multi-party system; (2) have universal suffrage for all adult citizens; (3) hold regular, contested, free, un-fraudulent elections; and (4) have significant public access of major political parties to the electorate.<sup>6</sup>

Huntington's understanding of democratic consolidation is more complex however. According to him, full-fledged democratization is a three-step process that begins with the end of the authoritarian regime, continues with the installation of a democratic regime, and ends with successful consolidation.<sup>7</sup> He distinguishes two groups of factors that influence the outcome of consolidation. First, transition factors are what I would call formal, visible transformations to the system—they are institutional and systemic in nature, and they are implemented from the top down, through the will of political elites. They include new

---

<sup>5</sup> Huntington, Samuel P., *The Third Wave: Democratization in the Late Twentieth Century* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1991), 266–7.

<sup>6</sup> Freedom House, *Freedom in the World 2005*, Essay, 4.

<sup>7</sup> Huntington, *The Third Wave*, 35.

constitutions and electoral rules, the replacement of proauthoritarian elites with democratic ones, the creation of a legislative framework suitable for democracy, the abolishment of authoritarian agencies such as oppressive secret polices, and the separation of powers.<sup>8</sup> The other, informal, invisible factors that affect democratic consolidation in an equally important way are termed contextual problems by Huntington; they stem from “the nature of society, its economy, culture, and history, and were in some degree endemic to the country, whatever its form of government.”<sup>9</sup> Thus, a second, societal level set of conditions also affect consolidation, and they have to do with the political culture and behavior of individual members of the democratizing society, regardless of their involvement in politics. It is to these factors that I turn for an understanding of Romania’s failure to consolidate its democracy sixteen years after the seeming end of totalitarianism.

Other works offer alternative or concurrent perspectives on democracy and consolidation. In *Polyarchy: Participation and Opposition*, Robert Dahl provides the two basic criteria for categorizing a given country as democratic—civil and political rights and fair, competitive, and inclusive elections.<sup>10</sup> Linz and Stepan define the consolidated democracy as one in which political elites and the public no longer conceive of undemocratic courses of action: “democracy becomes the only game in town...when all the actors in the polity become habituated to the fact that political conflict will be resolved according to established norms” and “when, even in the face of severe political and economic crises, the overwhelming majority of the people believe that any further political change must emerge

---

<sup>8</sup> Huntington, *The Third Wave*, 209.

<sup>9</sup> Huntington, *The Third Wave*, 209.

<sup>10</sup> Dahl, Robert, *Polyarchy: Participation and Opposition* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1971).

from within the parameters of democratic formulas.”<sup>11</sup> Linz and Stepan regard attitudinal, behavioral, and constitutional changes as necessary for the consolidation of democracy.

Observing the increasingly limited definition of democracy, Fareed Zakaria classifies democracies as liberal and illiberal. The former blend free elections with constitutional liberalism (which emphasizes civil rights and liberties and promotes a small government), while the latter are only democratic procedurally—in effect, their leaders may be corrupt and their institutions may be flawed. Noting that few of the newly democratizing countries mature into liberal democracies,<sup>12</sup> Zakaria claims that even traditional democracies have moved away from liberal constitutionalism: “Constitutional liberalism is about the limitation of power, democracy [as we know it today] about its accumulation and use.”<sup>13</sup>

Andreas Schedler agrees that the mere existence of democratic institutions is not enough to characterize a country as fully democratic and argues that it is more appropriate to view consolidation as “completing the democratic transition by traveling from electoral to liberal democracy.”<sup>14</sup> He lists a series of preconditions needed for democratic stability, which he divides into three categories: behavioral, attitudinal, and structural foundations of consolidated democracies.<sup>15</sup> The behavioral and attitudinal factors outlined by Schedler constitute the topic of this study, but Schedler analyzes these factors mainly from a top-down

---

<sup>11</sup> Linz, Juan J., and Alfred Stepan, *Problems of Democratic Transition and Consolidation: Southern Europe, South America, and Post-Communist Europe* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996), 5–6.

<sup>12</sup> Zakaria bases his judgment on the 1996–1997 *Freedom in the World* report. According to Freedom House’s 2005 *Freedom in the World* report, the situation was significantly better in 2004: of the 192 sovereign states, 119, or 62 percent, qualified as electoral democracies, and of these, 89 counties, or 75 percent, were deemed liberal democracies by the authors of the Freedom House survey. Freedom House, *Freedom in the World 2005*, Essay, available at <http://www.freedomhouse.org/research/freeworld/2005/essay2005.pdf>, accessed October 29, 2005, 4.

<sup>13</sup> Zakaria, Fareed, “The Rise of Illiberal Democracy,” *Foreign Affairs*, vol. 76, no. 6 (November/December 1997): 30.

<sup>14</sup> Schedler, Andreas “What is Democratic Consolidation?” *Journal of Democracy*, vol. 9, no. 2 (1998): 91–107, 99.

<sup>15</sup> Schedler, Andreas, “Measuring Democratic Consolidation,” *Studies in Comparative International Development*, vol. 36, no. 1 (Spring 2001): 66–92.

perspective, looking mostly at government officials and political elites. A similar look at the institutional/systemic level informs Przeworski et al.'s article on the bases of democratic consolidation—the authors consider the effects of affluence, economic performance of the government, the level of income inequality, a favorable or unfavorable international environment, and institutions on consolidation.<sup>16</sup> In an article focused on theories of democratic support, Richard Samuels weighs the relevance and influence of different institutional/systemic- and individual-level factors on democratic consolidation. The latter include familiarity with democracy and the importance of democratic beliefs. Samuels contrasts such ideational prerequisites for democracy with material ones, such as economic performance and people's material well-being.<sup>17</sup> His approach highlights some of the political culture and psychological characteristics of individuals that I consider as an independent variable in this paper.

In *Making Democracy Work: Civic Traditions in Modern Italy*, Robert Putnam explores the link between political culture and the quality/type of democracy, based on how “associative” a group of people are.<sup>18</sup> One of the first authors to advance the idea that democracy, political culture, and social psychology are connected is Seymour M. Lipset. In the classic *Political Man*, Lipset uses political sociology to analyze the social conditions for democracy and explores class conflicts and cleavages, value systems, the role of education, civil society, etc. to shed light on the idea of democracy. He claims that a stable democracy rests upon economic development and the effectiveness and legitimacy of a country's

---

<sup>16</sup> Przeworski, Adam, Michael Alvarez, Jose Antonio Cheibub and Fernando Limongi, “What Makes Democracies Endure?” *Journal of Democracy*, vol. 7, no. 1 (1996): 39–55.

<sup>17</sup> Samuels, Richard, “Comparing Theories of Democratic Support: Lessons from Post-Communist Europe,” *Democratization*, vol. 10, no. 2 (Summer 2003): 105–120.

<sup>18</sup> Putnam, Robert, *Making Democracy Work: Civic Traditions in Modern Italy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993).



political system.<sup>19</sup> A decade after Lipset's study, Dankwart A. Rustow provides a few conditions for democratic consolidation (Rustow's term "completeness" suggests a similar concept), which span the economic, social, and political realm. In the social realm, Rustow briefly introduces social psychology theories and the idea of community, holding that a community "birth defect" may hinder the genesis of democracy.<sup>20</sup> In a 1992 re-interpretation of Lipset's argument, Larry Diamond clarifies the link between economic development, social psychology, and democratization: "A careful reading of Lipset's thesis reveals that economic development promotes democracy only by effecting changes in political culture and social structure."<sup>21</sup>

Some authors look specifically at the individual level for clues as to how likely societies are to democratize successfully. Richard Rose and William Mishler suggest in their article on "Mass Reaction to Regime Change," that regime change "occurs at two levels, the macro and the micro," with the latter signifying the individual level. The authors show that there are two types of transition societies—leaders and laggards. Leaders favor a pluralistic system before experiencing it, while laggards hesitate to commit to an unfamiliar, untested regime. Given the history of civic struggle against communism in Poland, Czechoslovakia, and Hungary, the authors classify these countries as leaders, whereas Bulgaria and Romania fall under the category of laggards.<sup>22</sup> Similar to Rose and Mishler, Kluegel et al. analyze public opinion about the concept of "market justice" in five former communist countries,

---

<sup>19</sup> Lipset, Seymour M., *Political Man: The Social Bases of Politics* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1981), 64.

<sup>20</sup> Rustow, Dankwart A., "Transitions to Democracy: Toward a Dynamic Model," *Comparative Politics*, Vol. 2, No. 3 (April 1970), 337–363.

<sup>21</sup> Diamond, Larry, "Economic Development and Democracy Reconsidered," in *Reexamining Democracy: Essays in Honor of Seymour Martin Lipset*, Gary Marks and Larry Diamond, eds. (Newbury Park, London, New Delhi: Sage Publications, 1992), 128.

<sup>22</sup> Rose, Richard, and William T. E. Mishler, "Mass Reaction to Regime Change in Eastern Europe: Polarization or Leaders and Laggards?" *British Journal of Political Science*, Vol. 24, No. 2 (1994), 159–182.

immediately following the fall of communism. One of their arguments is that, the better understanding of capitalism among citizens of incipient democracies, the higher these democracies' chances to consolidate.<sup>23</sup> On the same line of reasoning, of individuals learning democracy, Geoffrey Pridham speaks of "political learning" that citizens breaking from a communist past need to do. Inverse legitimization of democracy by rejection of the past is not enough—a positive learning of democracy must ensue in order for transitions to be successful.<sup>24</sup> Though it is encouraging to see that authors have approached the issue of democratic consolidation from the individual point of view as well, existing studies do not specifically address the role of psychological factors in democratization.

#### **ORGANIZATION OF THE PAPER**

In the following chapter, I introduce a new perspective on democratic consolidation. The existing literature has not dealt extensively with the role individual citizens (and individuals as a community) play in the process of consolidation. This study brings the individuals into the picture by looking at psychological characteristics of the Romanian people, which may have delayed the process of democratic consolidation in this country. The second chapter starts with a brief introduction to the concept of political culture and the field of social psychology, which allows the reader to understand how such concepts can be used to determine a people's level of preparedness for democracy. It then presents the hypothesis at question in this study, as well and the methodology which will be used to test its validity.

---

<sup>23</sup> Kluegel, James R., David S. Mason, and Bernd Wgener, "The Legitimation of Capitalism in the Postcommunist Transition: Public Opinion about Market Justice, 1991–1996," *European Sociological Review*, Vol. 15, No. 3, 251–283.

<sup>24</sup> Pridham, Geoffrey, "Conflicting Conditions and Breaking with the Past: Historical Legacies and Political Learning in Transitions to Democracy," *Democratization*, Vol. 7, No. 2 (Summer 2000), 36–64.

This chapter also provides a detailed description of the level of democratic consolidation (the dependent variable) in Romania.

The third chapter focuses on the independent variable brought forth as an explanation for Romania's stalled consolidation. It introduces some key characteristics of a liberal, democratic mindset—as opposed to the mindset of people under authoritarian rule—and a few general psychological characteristics necessary to bring about the consolidation of transition democracies. The second half of the chapter describes the Romanian mindset. Chapter four continues the qualitative analysis by introducing a comparison between Romanians' psychology and the social psychological traits of other societies in Central and Eastern Europe (CEE). A qualitative analysis of attitudes toward democracy and social representations thereof provides a further test of the hypothesis.

Chapter five provides a discussion of the relationship between the independent and dependent variables, and a brief overview of four other variables which are closely related with the one proposed by this study: history, the moment of transition, information (availability and manipulation thereof), and government performance. The paper concludes with a discussion of the findings and of their implications for the broader theoretical questions derived from the specific question regarding Romania's consolidation.

## CHAPTER II

### A NEW LOOK AT DEMOCRATIC CONSOLIDATION—THE CASE OF ROMANIA

#### A DIFFERENT PERSPECTIVE

The existing literature on democratic consolidation provides a good understanding of the systemic, top-down factors influencing the outcome of democratization, but it makes little reference to the psychology of people living in transition societies. Notwithstanding the fact that systemic factors play an important role in the process of democratization, I focus on the individual-level characteristics of a population as a predictor of democratic consolidation. This chapter introduces a new approach to consolidation from a political culture/social psychology perspective. Political culture is part of the political science jargon and has been used extensively in comparative studies. It incorporates many different traits that may be used to describe individuals and groups: ideological and/or party affiliation, religious background, value system, etc. Political culture varies from state to state and among groups within a state. Where other authors discuss political culture, it is not analyzed in depth as a potentially determinant factor in the outcome of democratization. If political culture is cited by some authors, the psychology of transition societies is almost never mentioned in the existing literature. Though these aspects of democratizing societies are very fluid and hard to measure, ignoring them would provide a rather incomplete picture of the process of democratic consolidation.

Social psychology is the study of how individuals think, feel, and behave in regard to others and how the social environment influences human thought, emotion, and behavior. It seeks to describe behavior as a function of two factors: the social situation and individual

characteristics<sup>25</sup> and it does so by examining three central topics: social cognition, which studies the way in which perception, memory, language, and thinking are influenced by the social environment; the area of interpersonal relations, which focuses on how people coordinate their behavior with the behavior of other people; and the area of interactions within and between groups, which focuses on group processes.<sup>26</sup> In short, social psychology is the study of the nature and causes of human social behavior or, stated otherwise, the study of persons, their relationships with others, with groups, and with society as a whole.

In the context of the discussion of democratic consolidation, all of the main topics of social psychology are significant. Social cognition helps us understand how ideas about democracy are formed and interpreted by individuals as members of a particular group. In this sense, it sheds light on “how and why people share knowledge and thereby constitute their common reality, [on] how they transform ideas into practice.”<sup>27</sup> Serge Moscovici has advanced the concept of “social representations”—conceptualizations of values and facts based on the interaction between individuals and between the individual and society. For example, the interaction of individuals within a state with other individuals and with the state helps them create a certain set of values and understanding of reality. In a market-oriented democracy, social representations of freedom of choice, individualism, and initiative are predominant; in a communist regime, social representations revolve around egalitarianism, community, and, suppression of individual choice. Common understandings of core parameters of daily life lead, in turn, to common patterns of behavior among members of the

---

<sup>25</sup> Bordens, Kenneth S., and Irwin A. Horowitz, *Social Psychology* (Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Publishers), 4.

<sup>26</sup> *What Is Social Psychology?*, Faculty of Psychology and Education, Vrije Universiteit, Amsterdam, available at <http://www.psy.vu.nl/fpp.php/departments/socialpsychology/extra1/>.

<sup>27</sup> Moscovici, Serge, “Social Psychology and Developmental Psychology: Extending the Conversation,” in G. Duveen and B. Lloyd, eds., *Social Representations and the Development of Knowledge* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 164.

same group. The relationship between the individual and society with respect to social representations is a reciprocal one: the individual is both a producer and a consumer of social representations.

Usually outside of the sphere of political science, social psychology is thus distinct from political culture, in that it looks at behavior patterns, the formation of ideas, and individual and group dynamics rather than at characteristics of groups, which is what political culture does. While political culture describes a particular state of things, social psychology is better suited to describe processes such as democratic consolidation. Social psychological processes determine the kinds of values and attitudes that constitute political culture.

In this paper, I bring forth the power of invisible things like ideas, values, and attitudes, to shape the path upon which a society embarks. I contend that full democratic consolidation cannot come about if a transition society is not culturally and psychologically ready to make democracy “the only game in town.” My hypothesis is that, insofar as democracy can be learned, the lack of psychological preparedness for democracy has prevented Romania’s citizens and, implicitly, its government, from fully completing the transition to democracy. Such a hypothesis can be generalized to address the importance of social psychology for the advent of democracy elsewhere. In this paper, psychological factors are treated as an independent variable affecting democratic consolidation. Seymour Lipset categorized political and social cultures as intervening variables. For other authors, they may be a product of consolidation. I argue that they need to be in place if consolidation is to occur, although it is unquestionable that political culture and mentalities continue to change after the installation of democracy.

It is difficult to test this hypothesis because of the fluidity of the independent variable. Since the psychology of individuals is hard to measure, the case study is the most appropriate method of testing the hypothesis. The case study is a particularly appropriate tool because we are dealing with an outlier, as shown in the section below. Identifying and examining an outlier helps to single out one or more independent variables, which had not been previously considered.<sup>28</sup> In this case, shedding light on the laggard process of democratic consolidation in Romania brings to the foreground the important role played by social psychology in this country's progress.

The hypothesis, according to which there is a direct link between social psychology and democratic consolidation, is proven if it can be shown both that Romania is an outlier and that the psychology of the Romanian society is different from that of other societies in the region. The following section explains the outlier status of Romania. Chapter three provides a detailed analysis of the independent variable—it is the core of the case study. Chapter four adds a comparative perspective and integrates a quantitative analysis into the predominantly qualitative framework of the paper. Based on public opinion surveys conducted in post-communist countries, it is shown that the Romanian society stands out amid its neighbors.

If, based on the analysis of the case and of the data, it can be proven that psychological characteristics of a society do play a role in its democratic consolidation, then the hypothesis is supported and an expanded, more sophisticated analysis thereof becomes possible. The hypothesis is dismissed if it is shown that mental traits do not affect the outcome of democratization.

---

<sup>28</sup> Lijphart, Arend, "Comparative Politics and the Comparative Method," *American Political Science Review*, Vol. 65, No. 3 (September 1971), 682–693.

## CASE SELECTION AND THE DEPENDENT VARIABLE<sup>29</sup>

The alternative understandings of democratic consolidation have been overviewed in chapter one. This paper uses Freedom House International ratings of a country's democracy score as a means to operationalize consolidation. Freedom House assigns countries two scores, on a scale from 1 to 7, for a country's performance in terms of political rights and civil liberties. A country's combined average score is the figure which determines whether that country is free (a score of 1 to 2.5), partly free (a score of 3 to 5), or not free (a score of 5.5 or higher). Broadly, political liberties refer to how free and fair elections are, and to the other facets of procedural democracy; civil liberties refer to civil rights, civil society, and generally, those factors that distinguish between a liberal and an illiberal democracy. Using the Freedom House measurements is a simple means of operationalizing consolidation, but it suffices in the context of the current discussion.

Table 2 shows Freedom House democracy ratings for CEE states at the moment of transition from communism, in 1995, and again in 2005. Additionally, it includes other parameters of comparison between the countries of Central and Eastern Europe, such as Transparency International's corruption index, whether or not these countries have joined or are in the course of joining the European Union, type of communist regime, gross national income per capita, and the strength of civil society at the moment of transition from communism. It is informative because it allows for a broader comparison between the CEE states, which in turn provides a motivation for the case selection.

---

<sup>29</sup> I leave the former Yugoslav republics outside of this analysis because their situation is not comparable to that of other European post-communist states. I also leave aside Albania, Moldova, whose economic development is significantly lower than that of the other CEE countries, and the former Soviet republics—Ukraine, the Baltic States, and the Central Asian republics.



**Table 2. CEE Countries Compared**

COUNTRY	FH PRE-TRANSITION, 1995, AND 2005 RATINGS			TI	EU	TYPE OF COMMUNIST REGIME	INDEP.	GNI/CAPITA (\$)	CIVIC COALITIONS	FORCES DRIVING TRANSITION
Bulgaria	7	2	1.5	4.0	C	Personal dictatorship, not as virulent as in Romania	1878, 1918	1,770	Strong	Civic
Czech Rep.	6.5	1.5	1	4.3	M	Socialism with a 'human face,' harsh repression and strong Soviet involvement post 1968	1918, 1993	5,480	Strong	Civic
Hungary	4.5	1.5	1	5.0	M	More relaxed socialism, communist party congress dissolved itself in 1998	c1850	5,290	Strong	Mixed
Poland	5	1.5	1	3.4	M	Comparatively tolerant and progressive government, strong Soviet involvement	1300, 1918	4,570	Strong	Civic
Romania	7	3.5	2.5	3.0	C	Personal dictatorship, extremely repressive	1878, 1918	1,870	Moderate	Mixed
Russia	5.5	3.5	5.5	2.4	N	USSR		2,130	Moderate	Mixed
Slovakia	6.5	2.5	1	4.3	M	Same as Czech Republic.	1918, 1993	3,970	Strong	Civic

Sources: Freedom House International, Transparency International

Note: Explanations of the categories used in this table and their meanings are as follows:

- a) FH: Freedom House democracy ratings show the progress of democratization from the moment of transition to 2005.
- b) TI: Transparency International ranks countries in terms of the degree to which corruption is perceived to exist among public officials and politicians. Countries are scored on a scale of 1 to 10, where 1 is the poorest and 10 is the best corruption index.
- c) EU: European Union—M denotes membership, C denotes candidature, N denotes no accession negotiations.
- d) It is important to determine the nature of communist regime replaced in 1989, as the level of repressiveness of the regime certainly plays a part in the psychological formation of these societies.
- e) Indep.: The year(s) in which countries became independent—two dates denote different moments in the country's history. In the cases of Bulgaria and Romania, the initial date of independence is followed by the date when the countries achieved full international recognition as sovereign states (at the end of World War I). Poland has a long history of independence, but fell under the influence of different empires between the 14<sup>th</sup> and the 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. The second dates for the Czech Republic and Slovakia denote the year Czechoslovakia was split in two.

- f) GNI/Capita (\$): Gross National Income per capita, in dollars, in 2005. Romania and Bulgaria are the only two countries with per capita incomes of less than \$2,000.
- g) Civic Coalitions and Forces Driving Transition: Civic Coalitions refers to the strength of civil society at the time of the transition, and Forces Driving Transition refers to the key actors who influenced and ultimately caused transition to occur.

Several conclusions may be drawn from the data presented in Table 2. Excluding Russia, Romania has the lowest democracy index and one more decrease in its status would qualify it as partially free. Its score one full point below that of Bulgaria, the next country on the hierarchy constructed by Freedom House. Moreover, Romania and Russia are the only two countries whose democracy scores improved, and then declined. Romania's corruption index is the second lowest on this list, indicating that it is marred by corruption to a greater extent than other countries. Its corruption index is close only to those of Russia and, interestingly, Poland. Communism in Romania took perhaps its most repressive form compared to other countries in CEE. Even though Bulgaria was in a similar situation (personal dictatorship), Todor Zhivkov's leadership was not as stifling and terrorizing as that of Nicolae Ceausescu. Romanians, Bulgarians, and Russians fare the worst in terms of per capita income, with incomes less than half and in some cases one third of the per capita incomes of other states in the region. Finally, Romania and Russia are the only two cases in which civil society only had a moderate influence at the moment of transition from communism. This data is drawn from a recent Freedom House report entitled *How Freedom is Won: From Civic Resistance to Durable Democracy*, which shows that countries where transitions occurred in a peaceful manner are more likely to consolidate their democracies than those where transition was violent. Romania's was the only violent transition from communism to democracy in CEE.<sup>30</sup>

---

<sup>30</sup> Additionally, another Freedom House report, *Nations in Transit 2005*, captures the characteristics of states in transition from authoritarian rule to democracy in a more detailed fashion. Each country receives a democracy score that is a combination of seven ratings: electoral process, civil society, independent media, national

Thus, from many points of view, Romania is an outlier in CEE.<sup>31</sup> Some of the factors that distinguish it from other countries may be deemed to affect democratic consolidation directly—such is the case with GNI per capita, or the corruption index. However, the fact that the measurements for Romania in each category are similar to those for at least one of the countries whose democracies are further along the path of consolidation seems to indicate that there is something unique about its situation that has not been captured in this chart. I argue that this uniqueness derives from the special psychological features of Romanian society, which will be discussed at large in the following chapter.

Rather than a cross-regional comparison, it is instructive to compare the state of Romanian democracy with the regimes in Bulgaria and Poland due to the countries' relative positions on the continuum of 'free' states. Bulgaria shares most of Romania's characteristics, but it has advanced more in its democratic transition. Poland has a perfect freedom score, but is, in other ways, similar to Romania. Both parallels indicate that a different factor, which has not been discussed, might be at play in Romania. For all these reasons, Romania emerges as an interesting case, with characteristics that are potentially applicable to other former communist or formerly authoritarian states as well.

Romania's political liberties score (which reflects the procedural aspects of democracy) was lowered from 2 to 3 in 2005, due to the allegations of fraud during the presidential and parliamentary elections held in November 2004. Though the elections resulted in a change of governing party, an investigation or analysis of the fraud allegations

---

democratic governance, local democratic governance, judicial framework and independence, and corruption, all measured on a scale of 1 to 7. According to this methodology, Romania receives a score of 3.39 (about half way between most and least democratic), compared to Poland's score of 2, Bulgaria's score of 3.18, and Russia's score, of 5.61. The areas in which Romania most needs improvement are independence of the media (rated 4), the justice system (rated 4), and corruption (rated 4.25). Comparatively, Poland's biggest problem also seems to be in the area of corruption (rated 3), while Russia is struggling in a majority of categories.

<sup>31</sup> Linz and Stepan make a strong case for Romania's exceptionalism in *Problems of Democratic Transition and Consolidation*, 344–365.

by the then-opposition alliance (Justice and Truth Alliance, JTA), which is currently governing the country, never took place. Next to Russia, Romania has the dishonorable reputation of witnessing the only score decline recorded by Freedom House in one of the CEE states since the fall of communism in 1989. The incomplete consolidation of Romania's democratic institutions is also reflected in the periodic reports issued with regards to its EU integration progress by the European Commission. Though reports have not been entirely negative, the Romanian judicial system is still deemed inefficient and remains dependent on the executive branch; moreover, rule of law cannot be said to be the "only game" in the country. Corruption is rampant and the state seems to have tremendous difficulties in prosecuting those guilty of significant corruption. Civil society remains weak and "trial of communism" has not come about, leaving Romania's democratic-minded citizens wondering about the motives of the political class. Indeed, Romania has yet to acquire a mature political class that serves the public interest.

Comparatively, Bulgaria had received fewer warnings from the European Commission regarding its progress towards integration by the end of 2005. Because of political instability over negotiations to form a new government in 2005, Bulgaria may have lost the comparative advantage it held with respect to Romania in this regard. Bulgarian civil society is arguably stronger than that of Romania, with a tradition of independent association dating back to communist times, which was virtually nonexistent under Ceausescu's strict leadership to the North.<sup>32</sup> Though high, corruption is not as severe as in Romania. Moreover, elections have not been marred by the same doubts that have hovered over Romania's rounds of elections. Finally, Poland has achieved the highest democracy rating possible, after having

---

<sup>32</sup> By mid 1989 "at least thirteen independent associations and committees...founded for the defense of human rights and the environment" were functioning in Bulgaria. *Bulgaria: A Country Study*, Library of Congress, Federal Research Division, available at: <http://countrystudies.us/bulgaria/>.

joined the European Union, which Freedom House credits with the improvement in its civil liberties score. With political parties and a strong civil society rooted in dissident movements that functioned under Poland's more "humane" breed of communism, and an independent press, the country had already achieved high democratic standards during its first five years of transition. Corruption remains a problem, but the judiciary is independent and elections have been free and fair.<sup>33</sup> Most observers consider Poland to be a fully consolidated democracy.

---

<sup>33</sup> Freedom House International, *2005 Freedom in the World Report: Bulgaria, Poland, Romania*, 2005, available online at <http://www.freedomhouse.org/research/>.

## CHAPTER III

### A SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGICAL EXPLANATION FOR ROMANIA'S PROTRACTED TRANSITION

#### A NEW INDEPENDENT VARIABLE: THE MINDSET

A relatively new discipline, social psychology deals with the interactions between individuals and groups and among individuals that help shape group and individual attitudes and behavior, as well as group and individual understandings (representations) of concepts and situations. The previous chapter introduced the relationship between social psychology and representations and political processes. By definition, democratization is not only a political process, but also one that deeply changes society all the way to individual worldviews and values. Though democratic institutions may be established by forward-thinking elites, they will be more likely to prevail in a country whose population is psychologically prepared to embrace democracy than in a country whose population lacks the preparedness for the exercise of democracy. To employ Serge Moscovici's paradigm, those people who have a ready social representation of what democracy means will know how to behave in a democratic setting, thus reinforcing democracy and speeding up consolidation. Subsequently, the social representation of democracy will strengthen in their minds, leading to the creation of a truly liberal group and individual psychology.

In the previous section, Romania's exceptionalism was established through a comparison with other countries in the region. The same comparison reveals the failure of existing explanations to capture the reason behind the country's outlier status. Independent variables traditionally used by authors to account for the pace and outcome of democratic consolidation, such as level of economic and social development, foreign involvement, elite

behavior, etc., are not sufficient explanations for Romania's lack of consolidation. Many of the systemic variables often invoked in the literature are similar in Romania and elsewhere. For these reasons, I turn to psychological factors as a possible explanation of what has hindered Romania's transition. I argue that the Romanian public did not possess, at the outset of the democratization period, a strong enough social representation of democracy that it could actualize through behavior, thus reinforcing democratic consolidation. In 1989, the Romanian mindset was simply not ready to adjust to and be part of a democratic society. Though some initial conditions may have been similar in the case of Bulgaria, it is clear from the chronological Freedom House ratings shown in Table 2 that Romanian democratization has progressed at a slower pace than that of its neighbor to the South or that of Poland.<sup>34</sup>

The mindset thus becomes the independent variable that provides a key to distinguishing between consolidated democracies and unconsolidated ones in cases where other conditions affecting consolidation are identical or similar. I define mindset as the psychological state of a group, which is shared by a majority of the individuals in that group, and affects the behavior of the group as a whole. It includes values, conceptualizations of ideas, beliefs, and attitudes. In the case of transition democracies, it dictates people's expectations, demands and needs, their perceptions of and reactions to political gestures of elites, their ability to associate in civil society organizations and effect change, and their long-term commitment to a type of regime. The concept is broad and difficult to operationalize. It is also difficult to grasp empirically. To describe Romanians' mindset since the fall of communism, I use opinion polls and available voting data, as well as available interview data.

---

<sup>34</sup> With regards to Poland, it is noteworthy that its freedom rating was already significantly better than that of Romania and Bulgaria at the moment of transition in 1989.

Before delving into an analysis of Romanians' mindset, we need to have an understanding of the democratic/liberal mindset versus the authoritarian/non-democratic mindset, as well as of the social psychological traits required for a successful transition to democracy. In a study of the "modern liberal theory of man," Gerald Gaus describes what it means to be liberal by examining the writings of prominent liberal theorists Mill, Green, Hobhouse, Dewey, Rawls, and Bonssquet. Gaus describes the conscious and unconscious unity among liberal individuals in terms of general will and cites Dewey's social psychological understanding of the idea of community:

Men live in a community in virtue of the things they have in common; and communication is the way in which they come to possess things in common. What they must have in common in order to form a community or society are aims, beliefs, aspirations, knowledge—a common understanding—like-mindedness as the sociologists say.<sup>35</sup>

In this collective, intersubjective theory of liberalism, democracy is also described in terms of the community: "In its wider sense, 'democracy' means...a type of society characterised by a free exchange of ideas, varied intercourse, and an 'intelligent' attitude towards and within social institutions."<sup>36</sup> This democratic "way of life" is "educative," liberating, and participatory in nature.

By contrast, in an oppressive society, the individual and the group share a restrictive way of life that denies individual growth and participation in governance and decision-making. This promotes a psychology of disempowerment and ignorance. While the liberal individual always affirms him/herself and views his/her relationships with others and the government horizontally, on the same plane, the oppressed individual lacks self-affirmation and views relationships with others and with the government vertically, as a hierarchy. Moreover, the liberal individual thrives in his/her community (because it is within the

---

<sup>35</sup> Gaus, Gerald, *The Modern Liberal Theory of Man* (London and New York: Crook Helm, St. Martin's Press, 1983), 83–4.

<sup>36</sup> Gaus, *The Modern Liberal Theory of Man*, 207.



community that self-actualization takes place), while the oppressed individual lacks community support for self-actualization—in oppressive regimes, both the individual and the community lack constructive social representations that would allow them to transcend the state of oppression.<sup>37</sup>

What are the ingredients that make for a smooth transition from an authoritarian mindset to a democratic one? In a piece on the role of mass values in transitions to democracy, Kristen Hill Maher outlines some of the prerequisites for a successful democratic consolidation. She raises the questions of socialization, political culture, and whether or not democratic orientations are a cause or a result of democratization. A few such orientations are: support for multiparty competition and nonviolent conflict resolution; support for rule of law and democratic constitutionalism; political tolerance; valuing individual liberty (a “rights” orientation); interpersonal trust and cooperative social relations; a participatory orientation; and external and internal efficacy (the belief that one has an effect on the political elites and institutions, and that one also has confidence in one’s own ability to be effective).<sup>38</sup> Many of these prerequisites appear in the literature on consolidation reviewed in the first chapter, particularly in the works of Huntington, Lipset, Putnam, and Rustow.

Based on the studies available in 1997, Hill Maher concludes that prospects for democracy in post-communist countries are mixed, and cautions that non-democratic

---

<sup>37</sup> A further, telling description of the differences between the liberal mindset and the mindset of people coming out of totalitarianism appears in an article on ideology and identity published in 1995. The researchers, a team of social psychologists, conducted a survey among Bulgarian, Hungarian, Norwegian, and US students, in which they asked the subjects to select the most and least meaningful ten values from a comprehensive list. The values that the Eastern Europeans selected differed quite considerably from those selected by respondents in established democracies. Bulgarians and Hungarians selected largely symbolic, community-owned values such as past, homeland, mentality, ancestry, national spirit, culture, art, and state. Norwegians and Americans selected values commonly associated with liberalism, such as democracy, liberty, independence, money, position, standard of living, justice, etc. See Larsen, Knud S. et al, “Ideology and Identity: A National Outlook,” *Journal of Peace Research*, Vol. 32, No. 2 (1995), 165–179.

<sup>38</sup> Hill Maher, Kristin, “The Role of Mass Values,” in *Democratic Theory and Post-Communist Change*, Robert D. Grey, ed. (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1997), 79–110.

orientations reinforced by individuals' and countries' past history (what she calls the 'orthodox' culturalist approach) are deeply ingrained and can only be removed through the cultural change that accompanies modernization (such as *glasnost* in the Soviet Union, or post-communist modernization) or through the concerted actions of conscientious politicians and rapid economic development.<sup>39</sup> Maher thus argues that the existing mindset in Central and Eastern Europe at the fall of communism operated as a setback to democratization, and that, at the same time, democratization has influenced this mindset in positive ways, making it more conducive to further democratization. Her affirmations need to be qualified however—she does not suggest that all CEE countries share the same particularities. Her theory would predict that Romania might democratize more slowly, given the lack or weakness of some of the factors she enumerates as necessary for consolidation—political tolerance, interpersonal trust and cooperative social relations, and internal and external efficacy. While Poland displays all of these three characteristics, Bulgaria displays the first two to a larger extent than Romania, given the relative strength of its civil society.<sup>40</sup>

Gaus and Hill Maher's work prove that social psychology is instrumental in providing an understanding of why and at what pace democracy consolidates. Having established a few characteristics of the liberal and non-democratic mindsets, as well as some social psychological prerequisites for democratic consolidation, what follows is an analysis of the mindset of Romanians at the time of and since the fall of communism.

---

<sup>39</sup> Hill Maher, "The Role of Mass Values," 99–100.

<sup>40</sup> Prior to 1989, Romania was the only country in the CEE bloc, which virtually lacked a civil society. As a result, civil society organizations continue to be weaker in Romania than elsewhere in the region.

## INSIDE THE 'MIND' OF ROMANIAN SOCIETY

Keeping in mind the theoretical considerations laid out above regarding the psychologies of individuals living in liberal democracies and oppressive regimes, as well as the psychological requisites for a successful democratic transition and consolidation, we now turn to an analysis of the Romanian mindset from the time of the regime change until now.

Prior to the 1989 transition, Romanian social psychology revolved around fear, mistrust, and a sense of helplessness. Linz and Stepan describe the communist regime in the country as the most repressive one in CEE. The only country never to experience a post-totalitarian culture of relative political relaxation, Romania had virtually no independent civil-society movements in 1989.<sup>1</sup> Paradoxically, Romanian society was, at the same time, highly mobilized, with almost all social organizations belonging to the Communist Party network. This peculiar characteristic, paired with the ubiquity of Securitate—the most repressive secret police in the region—and its informers,<sup>2</sup> led to a collective feeling of fear and mistrust. Finally, due to the highly discretionary, almost absurd character of Ceausescu's personal leadership,<sup>3</sup> the Romanian public felt largely paralyzed and helpless with respect to effecting political change (at any level of the polity).

All of these features reflect the contrast between the liberal and illiberal mindsets, as well as Kristin Hill Maher's preconditions for democratic consolidation. Unlike a liberal society, which is funded on interpersonal trust, free communication, and participation in social institutions, Romanian society was mistrustful, unable to express itself, and non-

---

<sup>1</sup> Romania had only two independent organizations in June 1989, none of which had publicly known leaders. Compare to Bulgaria's thirteen (all of which had publicly known leaders) and Poland's sixty independent movements in 1989. See Linz and Stepan, *Problems of Democratic Transition*, 352.

<sup>2</sup> Recently declassified information shows that even pre-teen students were employed by Securitate to collect and report information on their family members, classmates, and teachers.

<sup>3</sup> Linz and Stepan characterize such a style of leadership as 'sultanistic,' citing Max Weber's taxonomy of regimes. See Linz and Setpan, *Problems of Democratic Transition*, 52.

participatory in nature. Its citizens lacked both internal and external efficacy. In short, the Romanian social psychology was that of the oppressed. At the time of transition, only a handful of students, intellectuals, and members of the Hungarian minority revolted against the regime. When, in the spring of 1990, thousands took to the streets of Bucharest, calling for real reforms and liberalization, interim leader Ion Iliescu (former communist apparatchik) destroyed their hopes for a better future by bringing in hordes of coal miners to beat up the protesters and 'bring order' to Bucharest.<sup>44</sup> In the words of historian Tom Gallagher, at that moment Romania became a "weird" country in the eyes of the West.<sup>45</sup> The relatively small group of Romanians who had been psychologically prepared to take action against communism once and for all was silenced and has remained disenchanting and largely unheard since. It was never given a chance to instill its superior understanding of democracy in the rest of the population, leaving Romanians with an incomplete, simplistic, and often-contradictory social representation of democracy.

Though the 1996 elections installed a pro-Western, pro-market Parliament and president, the turnover of elites and the subsequent building of a democratic framework were insufficient for the promotion of a liberal democracy. Romania remains a procedural democracy today, which proves that top-down, elite-driven explanations of democratic consolidation are insufficient. The slow pace of democratic consolidation can be ascribed to a weak civil society, which remains unable to comprehend the meaning of democracy and to pressure political elites into doing what is best for the country. A 1997–1998 study whereby thirty-one subjects from urban areas and living abroad were interviewed about the meaning

---

<sup>44</sup> A similar peaceful tent city in Sofia, Bulgaria, lasted for weeks without any attempt at repression by the government.

<sup>45</sup> Gallagher, Tom, *Modern Romania: The End of Communism, the Failure of Democratic Reform, and the Theft of a Nation* (New York: New York University Press, 2005), 116.

of democracy found that Romanians had yet to learn democracy.<sup>46</sup> For obvious reasons—small number of interviewees, urban bias—the study’s findings have limited significance. However, the authors’ take on the “Romanian discourses of democracy” is worth presenting.

The interviewers found that Romanians had three competing and interconnected discourses on the meaning of democracy. One group of interviewees reflected a traditional view of liberal democracy—for them, democracy meant commitment to a market economy, private property, individual and minority rights, equality of opportunity, constitutional government, representative pluralist democracy, and compromise. This liberal mindset was consistent with the mindsets found in other former communist countries. The authors of the study manifest surprise at finding a true commitment to democracy ingrained in the Romanian psyche, but this need not be so, given the urban bias of the study. The second and third discourses about democracy were unique to Romania and proved that “plenty of scope for learning about democracy remains in Romania.”<sup>47</sup> The second, civic fundamentalism, is committed to some of the same norms as the liberal democracy model, but is undemocratic insofar as it preaches a highly moralistic acceptance of a unitary public good, and shows no tolerance for compromise. The third, termed deferential collectivism, is the least democratic of the three models—a superficial, symbolic commitment to democracy covers hostility to markets, private property, individual rights, and the rule of law. Though described as collectivism,

Any common goals do not involve the sort of material redistribution to which collectivists are normally committed. Deferential Collectivism rejects both the pursuit of material equality and an emphasis on market consumption. Thus it is not easily placed on any conventional left–right spectrum. Deferential Collectivism is illiberal in its lack of regard for individual rights and the rule of law, as well as its attitude to market competition. Of the three Romanian discourses, this is the one happiest

---

<sup>46</sup> Chiriac, Bogdan, “Late Developers—Romania,” Dryzek, John S. and Leslie Templeton Holmes, eds., *Post-communist Democratization: Political Discourses across Thirteen Countries* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 190–205.

<sup>47</sup> Chiriac, Bogdan, “Late Developers,” 200.

with the post-communist status quo. It is deferential in its attitude to political leadership and state authority, and perhaps that deference extends even to the definition of the public good.<sup>48</sup>

This apparently direction-less mindset is one of anomie, of indifference to values. The social representations derived from such a mindset are void of meaning and unable to instill positive impulses for democratic behavior in the Romanian population.

Deferential collectivism is now more prominent than before. In 2006, Romanians find themselves still in a slowly consolidating democracy. Economically, their needs have not been satisfied by successive governments. Morally, either they have embraced and incorporated into their daily lives the pervasive corruption of politicians from all parties and orientations, or they have severed themselves from the majority of society (which has chosen corruption as a means of fulfilling otherwise legitimate needs) and have fallen prey to alienation. Socially, they are concerned with personal and small-group goals rather than communal ones—in other words, the tendency in Romanian society today is toward what Sorin Matei calls privatism. Privatism is the choice to satisfy individual, private needs, pushing to the side all responsibility towards public life, especially work-related ones. He traces the emergence of a privatist Romanian ethos to the years following the Soviet occupation of 1944, which, contrary to traditional wisdom, did not have the effect of spurring collectivism; on the contrary, Romanian society responded to the forceful introduction of communism by a “widespread popular disconnect from public engagement.”<sup>49</sup>

Recent poll data indicate similar trends to the ones described above. In terms of their ability to influence important decisions pertaining to their community and country, Romanians feel mostly helpless. A 2004 national poll revealed that only 13 and 8 percent of

---

<sup>48</sup> Chiriac, Bogdan, “Late Developers,” 203.

<sup>49</sup> Matei, Sorin, “The Emergent Romanian Post-Communist Ethos: From Nationalism to Privatism,” *Problems of Post-Communism* 51, 2 (March/April 1994): 40–47.

respondents believed they could influence decisions at the local level and national levels, respectively. The same year, 32 percent of respondents said they trusted others, and 59 percent said they did not. These figures reflect the fact that Romanians continue to have superficial inter-personal relationships and virtually no relationship with their political elites. Data from the same year suggests that they continue to regard the state as an important player in democratic institutions such as the press and political parties—15 percent of Romanians believed the state should intervene in the activity of the press, and 24 percent believed the state should intervene in the activity of political parties.<sup>50</sup> In 2005, Romanians were still split on the importance of freedom and equality—49 percent believed freedom to be more important, while 41 percent expressed themselves in favor of social equality.<sup>51</sup>

---

<sup>50</sup> Open Society Foundation—Romania, *Barometrul de opinie publica 2004*, available at [http://www.osf.ro/ro/detalii\\_program.php?id\\_prog=19](http://www.osf.ro/ro/detalii_program.php?id_prog=19). With regards to the extent of Romanians' deferential attitude toward the state, a 1999 national opinion poll showed that 83 percent of respondents believed the state should play a role in establishing prices, and 89 percent believed the state should play a role in reducing unemployment. See *Barometrul de opinie publica 1999*.

<sup>51</sup> Open Society Foundation—Romania, *Barometrul de opinie publica 2005*, available at [http://www.osf.ro/ro/detalii\\_program.php?id\\_prog=19](http://www.osf.ro/ro/detalii_program.php?id_prog=19).

## CHAPTER IV

### ROMANIANS' MINDSET IN COMPARATIVE PERSPECTIVE

Taken separately, the Romanian case appears unique. It also stands out when compared to the other countries in the region. Comparative opinion surveys from successive periods of democratization point to Romania's singularity among its neighbors. This section presents such comparative findings, and introduces a simple quantitative analysis of the data as a test of the central hypothesis.

A comprehensive survey of Central and Eastern Europeans' attitudes towards democracy conducted from 1990 to 1992 has revealed extremely interesting findings regarding the mindset of Romanians compared to that of other post-communist societies.<sup>52</sup> At the onset of transition, only 66 percent of Romanian respondents were able to answer open-ended questions about the meaning of democracy—the lowest percentage of all countries interviewed. By contrast, 72 percent of Hungarians, 81 percent of the Poles, and 87 percent of the Czechoslovaks were able to answer this question. Romania also scored 10 to 30 percentage points below on questions regarding the political left and right, with 45 percent of respondents being able to define the left wing, and only 41 percent being able to define the right wing.<sup>53</sup> Authors of *The Postcommunist Citizen* also note that, despite Romanians' apparently high levels of support for democracy, “in comparison to other countries, the

---

<sup>52</sup> The study was conducted by country teams in Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia republics, the former GDR, Estonia, Hungary, Krasnoyarsk, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Slovenia, and Ukraine. In Romania, the survey was conducted in December 1990. Its findings are reported in Barnes, Samuel H., and Janos Simon, eds., *The Postcommunist Citizen* (Tatabanya, Hungary: Alfadat-Press, 1998).

<sup>53</sup> Barnes and Simon, *The Postcommunist Citizen*, 105. Such figures seem to validate a metaphoric expression employed by former communist economist-turned-political-analyst Silviu Brucan to describe Romanians: “stupid people.” In his remark, Brucan referred to the level of political intelligence of Romanians, their understanding (or lack thereof) of democracy and their psychological preparedness for a democratic way of life. At the time, Brucan also predicted that it would take Romanians fifteen years to transition to democracy; in retrospect, his estimate was overly optimistic.



understanding of democracy in Romania is least consistent with the normative model. Only a small minority of Romanian citizens associate exclusively or dominantly democratic values with democracy.”<sup>54</sup> When asked what they would do if they believed the government to be taking measures against popular interests, Romanian responses indicated a “violent procedure of interest realization”<sup>55</sup>: “I always carry my pocket-knife,” “I have two strong fists,” “I’d overturn the table on them,” etc. Respondents from other countries said they would look up their parliamentary representative, talk to the mayor, call the radio or TV, etc.

With regard to the meaning of freedom, Romanians favored freedom from fear (of the repressive mechanism of the state, of the secret police—Securitate), a “self-limiting” image of democracy (freedom, but with boundaries), nationalist fulfillment, and the duty of citizens to work honorably (as opposed to opportunities for work in general, which is what respondents in other countries called for).<sup>56</sup> Such figures point to both a cognitive and an attitudinal problem of the Romanian public. On the one hand, it started its transition to democracy without a coherent cognitive representation of democracy. Behaviorally, Romanians were also unfit to welcome democracy. Altogether, their attitude toward democracy was a self-limiting one.<sup>57</sup>

If a lack of psychological preparedness for democracy is understandable at the beginning of the transition period, results from the second and third waves of the World

---

<sup>54</sup> Fuchs, Dieter, and Edeltraud Roller, “Cultural Conditions of the Transition to Liberal Democracy in Central and Eastern Europe,” in Barnes and Simon, *The Postcommunist Citizen*, 35–78, 56.

<sup>55</sup> Fuchs and Roller, “Cultural Conditions,” 83.

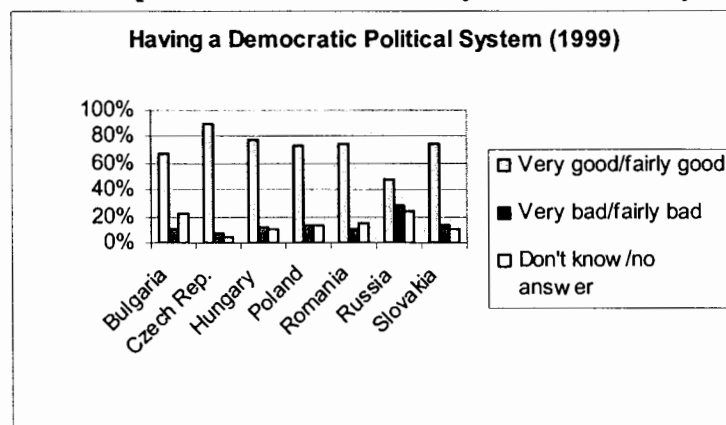
<sup>56</sup> Fuchs and Roller, “Cultural Conditions,” 92–3.

<sup>57</sup> Rose and Mishler cite the 1991 New Democracies Barometer, pointing out that Romania recorded, however, the highest level of support for democracy when compared to Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, and Poland. Indeed, 66 percent of Romanian respondents are labeled “democrats” by the author, as compared to 60 percent in Bulgaria and only 45 percent in Poland and Hungary (the other categories are skeptics, complaints, and reactionaries). The authors attributed this to Romanians’ thirst for democracy after the experience of the most repressive communist regime in CEE. Once more, it seems that Romanians are largely uninformed about what democracy means, though ready to commit to it at the beginning of the 1990s. Rose and Mishler, “Mass Reaction,” 170.

Values Survey<sup>58</sup> suggest that Romanians continued on the same path almost a decade after the fall of communism, when neighboring publics were significantly closer to a liberal mindset.

Citizens across CEE agreed on general questions regarding the type of regime that is preferable, or the role of government. With the exception of Russia, more than two thirds of the citizens in each of the seven countries in the region considered a democratic system to be preferable to a non-democratic one. Chart 1 summarizes this finding.

**Chart 1. Opinions about Democracy as a Political System**



Source: World Values Survey

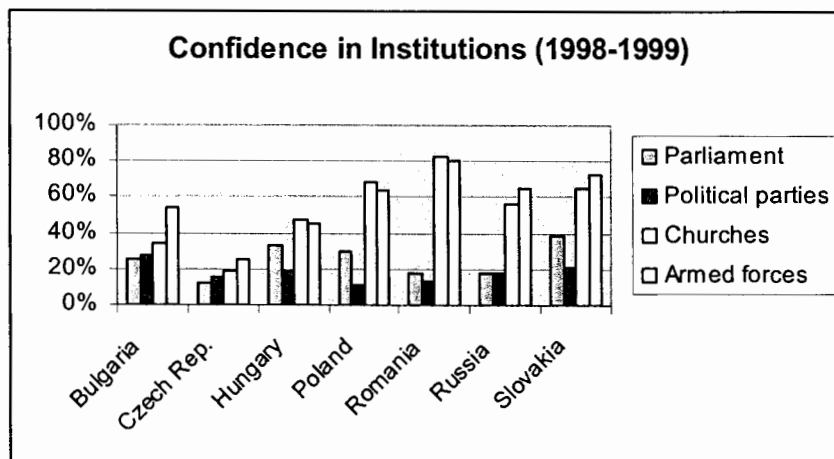
After the negative experiences of decades of communism, it is no surprise that democracy is so widely accepted as a preferable type of regime in the region (inverse legitimization). Though democracy was largely accepted in the region a decade after the fall of the Berlin Wall, the meaning of democracy remained unclear to respondents across the region. When asked what the most important role of the government should be, all respondents value 'order in the nation' first, followed by the fight against inflation, and only then by the two measures of democratic rights included in the answer choices (giving people more say and protecting

<sup>58</sup> International Network of Social Scientists, *World Values Survey*, available online at <http://www.worldvaluessurvey.org/services/index.html>. Data includes survey results from the second and third waves of the Survey, carried out between 1997 and 1999.

free speech). These answers reinforce the notion that economic and social security tend to be more important than political rights in a hierarchy of needs. Similarly, when asked if the government should provide basic needs for all, respondents in all countries agree that this is a very important role of the government, doubtlessly due to their socialist legacy.

When asked more specific questions regarding democracy, Romanians once more stand out as less inclined to favor democratic norms. They seem to place less confidence overall in democratic institutions and more confidence in traditional, non-democratic institutions such as churches (in proportion of 82 percent, compared to 68 percent in Poland, 34 percent in Bulgaria, and 19 percent in the Czech Republic) or the armed forces (80 percent, compared to 65 percent in Russia, and 54 percent in Bulgaria). Romanians have the lowest confidence in the press (57 percent lack of confidence) and political parties (80 percent lack of confidence), while Bulgaria has the least confidence in the parliament and the justice system.

**Chart 2. Opinions about Institutions**

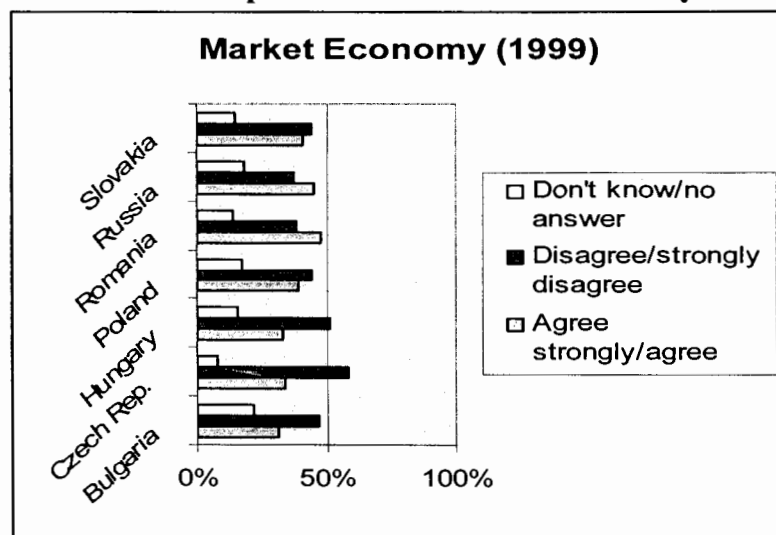


Source: World Values Survey

Perhaps as a result of the Romanians' general lack of trust in democratic institutions, they also do not relate well to the body politic and are largely apathetic about politics, more

so than their neighbors. Considerably fewer Romanians and Bulgarians have ever signed or would ever consider signing a petition as a form of political participation. Romanians report a comparatively low level of interest in politics and, like Bulgaria, a relatively low interest in political news, with a percentage of people who watch the news less than once or twice a week or never double that of its neighbors. Overall, Romanians are also the least satisfied with the way democracy is developing in their country, with the level of respect for human rights, and with those in national office.

**Chart 3. Opinions about a Market Economy**

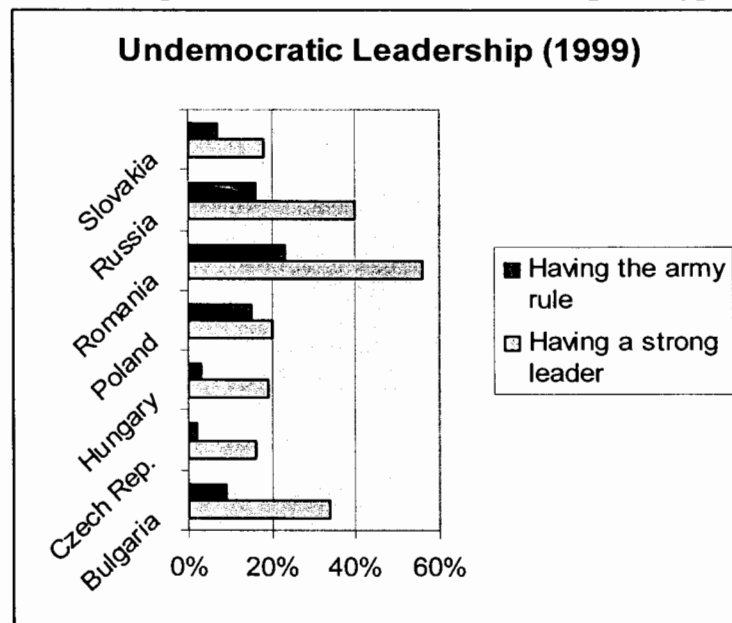


Source: World Values Survey

Finally, the general dissatisfaction and mistrust of politicians and politics reflects poorly on Romanians' perceptions of democracy and good economic and democratic governance. As Chart 3 indicates, Romanians are most dissatisfied with the economic system associated with democracy (48 percent), even when compared to Russians (45 percent). Other publics' opinion of the market economy is more favorable—the percentage of people unhappy about it ranges between 31 (in Bulgaria, whose economic progress closely resembles that of Romania) and 39 (in Poland). In fact, Romania and Russia are the only countries in the group where a market economy is considered less auspicious than another

economic system. Fifty-seven percent of the Romanian respondents think that having a strong leader who does not have to bother about parliament or elections is a fairly good and very good thing, as compared to 34 percent thinking the same in Bulgaria, and only 20 percent in Poland, respectively. Equally alarming is Romanians' response to the possibility of rule by the army—25 percent think that would be a fairly good and very good idea, compared to 16 percent in Poland and 9 percent in Bulgaria.

**Chart 4. Opinions about Undemocratic Regime Types**



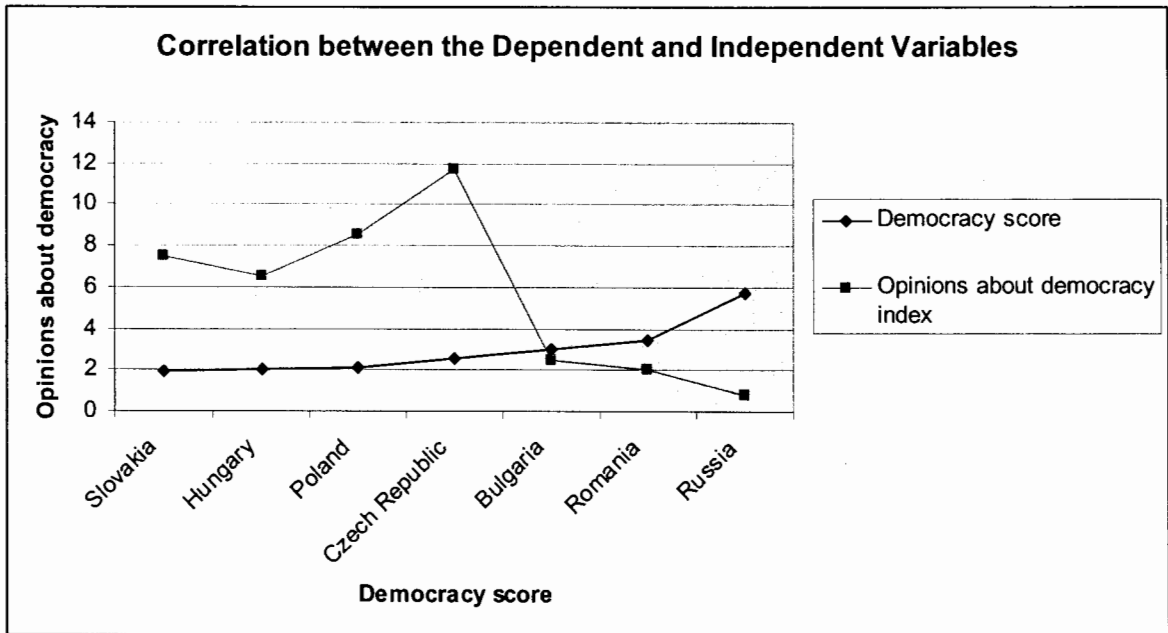
Source: World Values Survey

Finally, the percentage of respondents who deem democracy problematic, but still better than other forms of government is the lowest in Romania (66 percent as opposed to 76 percent in Slovakia, and 88 percent in the Czech Republic and Poland).

The correlation between people's opinions about democracy and countries' democracy scores is better captured in the chart below, which draws a parallel between the *Nations in Transit* democracy scores of countries and their citizens' opinions and attitudes toward democracy. I constructed a simple index of attitudes toward democracy based on

three questions reviewed above (though problematic, is democracy preferable? is a market economy preferable? is it preferable to have a strong leader rule the country?) and plotted values from this index against the countries' democracy scores. As the graph suggests, democracy scores and opinions about democracy are correlated.

**Chart 5. Correlation between the Dependent and Independent Variables**



## CHAPTER V

### ANALYSIS AND CONCLUSION

At this point, it is necessary to describe the relationship between the independent and dependent variables more clearly. The two variables are clearly correlated. Like the qualitative analysis in chapter three, which portrays Romanians as psychologically unprepared for democracy, the World Values Survey data also seems to single out Romanians as less democratically inclined than other post-communist publics. Just as Romania is an outlier when it comes to its laggard democratic consolidation, so is its population uniquely ill equipped to embrace democracy. Having established in chapter two that Romania is an exceptional case of a semi-consolidated democracy among CEE countries, we find in chapter three that at the time of transition, the social psychology of Romanians rendered them unable to cope with the change of regime. More than fifteen years later, Romanians' cognitive and behavioral acceptance of democracy remains poor, making it hard for them to embrace it as the 'only game in town.' At the same time other publics' understanding and appreciation of democracy seems to have matured after a decade or so of democracy. Thus, both the qualitative and the quantitative information overviewed here prove that there is a correlation between social psychological factors and the state of democratic consolidation.

The question whether the relationship is causal is a more difficult one. I contend that social psychology affects a country's prospects of democratic consolidation before the process of consolidation starts to reshape public attitudes and behavior. It is true that the two variables reinforce each other, but a people's psychological legacy creates a sort of path

dependence (it is the independent variable in this pair). In this case, the dissident, more independent attitudes of the Czechs, the Poles, and even the Bulgarians, have allowed these countries to embark on a more secure path to a liberal democracy than has the deferential, helpless attitude of the Romanians. A lack of democratic mindset left the Romanians confused as to roles of civil society and the state in a democracy, as well as unwilling to partake in political action and decision-making. Never having taken full ownership of the regime change, the Romanian public was complacent in the face of several poor governments and, rather than demanding higher standards of governance, followed the elites' example of corruption and self-interest. Anti-democratic tendencies are self-perpetuating, as are democratic ones. It is thus understandable why the Romanian public continues to look for the fulfillment of democracy when it has not found its meaning yet.

Proof of Romanians' lack of psychological preparedness for democracy is consistent with the country's low democratic index assigned by Freedom House, and supports my hypothesis that a democratic mindset promotes consolidation, and vice versa—people who are not ready to embrace democracy face protracted transitions. If indeed, Romanians are especially less inclined toward democracy than citizens of other former communist states in CEE, another question arises—what factors participate in creating a mindset? Can we assess the level of democratic potential of a people's mindset by looking at the factors that help shape it? If that is the case, many options arise. We may be able to predict the likelihood that a country will democratize based on the existence or lack of factors conducive to a democratic mindset. The complexity of a society's mindset cannot be easily deconstructed; I propose four factors that have contributed to the Romanians' mindset as it has developed before and during the transition period.



Of the four, history provides a rather potent explanation for the mindset and could be construed as an independent variable affecting consolidation in and of itself. I caution against such an interpretation of history as overly deterministic and prefer to use history as a determinant of psychological traits rather than of democratic consolidation per se. History in itself is not a variable, but rather a cluster of variables that can be analyzed independently, but not as a whole. The following brief discussion of history leaves room for a more in-depth analysis.

### *History*

Historically, there has been no democratic tradition in Romania. Since early medieval times, the principalities that united to create the current state in 1918 have come under subsequent waves of foreign rule. The lack of an independent sovereign government mixed with the traditional land-centered structure of Romanian society to create a pattern of disempowerment and lack of political representation and participation for the Romanian population. Moreover, puppet governments installed by foreign princes started the tradition of corruption and illegitimacy centuries ago. When Romania finally acquired its independence, its constitutional monarchy did little to emancipate the Romanian population politically. When the monarchy was removed in 1945, there was no hope left for the development of a democratic culture in Romania.

Bulgaria's history closely resembles that of Romania. One of the most marked differences in Bulgaria was the nature of the communist regime, which never became as repressive as Ceausescu's in Romania. However, from a historic point of view, it cannot be argued that Bulgarians should develop a significantly different mindset than that of Romanians. The Poles on the other hand have had a long history of independence and were

quite a powerful nation before falling to neighboring empires in medieval times. Poland's recent history closely resembles that of Bulgaria and Romania, except that its communist regime was comparatively relaxed, internally (externally, the Soviet Union kept a strong hold of the country). The more progressive communist government in Warsaw allowed for some freedom of assembly and expression long before 1989, which set the stage for a strong Polish civic sentiment and a culture of political participation.

#### *1989—the Moment of Transition*

In Romania, transition from communism happened late and abruptly. More than a thousand peaceful protesters died in the Romanian “revolution,” in stark contrast with Czechoslovakia's “velvet revolution” and Poland's gradual transfer of power from the communist government to the Solidarity. Bulgaria's transition was similar to Romania's in that it was also an inside, “palace coup,” planned and implemented by younger communist leaders who wanted to secure positions of power in the unavoidable new order. However, the coup did not create any casualties in Bulgaria. Prospects for democratic consolidation thus appear weaker from the start in Romania's case (considering Freedom House's contention that violent regime changes make for bumpy transition periods).

Even more interesting is the way in which the mechanism of regime change affected people's mindset. The Polish people took ownership of their country's regime change—transition was society driven and deeply rooted in an already existing widespread social psychological representation of freedom and participation in government. On the contrary, in Romania, only a minority of the population was psychologically prepared to challenge the communist regime. The impetus for change was short spanned and short lived, because of the brutal repression of pro-democratic manifestations in Bucharest's University Square in the

summer of 1990. Romanians had not had a strong societal push for change in 1989, and would not build a strong civil society. By contrast, Bulgaria had a burgeoning civil society at the onset of democracy, and Freedom House even contends that its transition to democracy was entirely civic-driven, though that is debatable.

Given the differences in mental preparedness of the three societies for the fall of communism, and in the degrees of involvement by the people in the transition, we are able to assert once more Romania's unique position.

#### *Access to Information*

Appropriate access to unbiased information is crucial in the development of a free mentality. In Romania, the national broadcast corporation, which transmits radio and TV programming to the remotest corners of the country, has traditionally been controlled by the government, regardless of the political affiliation of the incumbent government. As a result, about half of Romania's population—rural dwellers—has had very little, if any access to the independent media. Moreover, leftist governments, which have dominated the Romanian government since 1989, have used creative means to control privately-owned media outlets. A similar situation ensued in Bulgaria. Also similar to Bulgaria, Romania placed strong legal limits on the editorial freedom of journalists for a long time. By contrast, the press has been independent and trustworthy in Poland.

The result of this clever control of the press by political interests has been a continued proneness to manipulation of the Romanian people, whose minds had been molded by the communist leadership for decades.

### *A Broken Social Contract*

As we have seen, Romanians have been highly dissatisfied with their post-communist leaders—individuals and parties alike—and democratic institutions. Six rounds of elections have yielded very little differences in governance and no concrete economic progress as far as the standard of living is concerned. This has resulted in lower voter turnouts, unstable voter preferences and voter migration, and overall apathy. In 1998, the World Values Survey indicated that 66 percent of Romania's population believed that the country was run by a few big interests rather than in the name of all people. Of the remaining 34 percent, half did not know which of the two answers were correct, leaving only 17 percent with a belief that their interests were being protected by the government. With increasing levels of endemic corruption, the statistics are not much more encouraging today. Indeed, Romania's political class has done very little to cater to people's wishes—it has in effect broken the social contract reaffirmed by each round of voting.

In addition to corruption and bad governance, subsequent leading majorities have failed to adopt and implement lustration laws that helped built trust in the government in other CEE states. Both Romania and Bulgaria passed weak freedom of information laws; though implemented late, Poland's lustration and vetting laws had visible effects on the political class, which has been "safe" in Bulgaria and Romania since the fall of communism. One reason for this might be the fact that in both countries, communism was only partially ousted in 1989—former communist apparatchiks continued to hold power after skillful maneuvers immediately following the transition moment, and are still infiltrated at all levels of decision making today.

The breaking of the social contract by Romania's governing elites not only created a deep feeling of mistrust in politics in the population; it has also contaminated the average Romanian citizen with a feeling that s/he, too, can break all rules that govern normal, healthy societies. Thus, corruption and dishonesty have spread to all levels of society, endangering the fragile moral fabric of the Romanian population and distorting the mindset needed for democratic consolidation.

## CONCLUSION

Two principal conclusions can be drawn from this extensive discussion of Romanians' social psychological makeup before and during the country's protracted process of democratization. First, with respect to the narrower question regarding the factors that influence democratic consolidation, the hypothesis has been confirmed by the case at hand—psychological factors doubtlessly play a role in the outcome of a country's democratization. A simplistic and erroneous social representation of democracy among the Romanian public has created patterns of behavior that are not conducive to democracy. It seems that deferential collectivism and privatism have encroached Romanian society to a large extent—if that is the case, the burden of steering the country towards democracy lies with political elites and with those individual members of society who have not given in to anomie and corruption. However, without consent and active participation by the people, elites are in power, but not empowered. The fact that Romania has failed to consolidate its democracy fully also points both to elites' inability or unwillingness to perform the task of consolidation and to a failure of society to live by and impose democratic values on its leaders. Romanians'

mindset has shaped the outcome of democratization in a significant manner and will continue to do so.

In light of Romania's similarities with other former communist states in CEE, it is important to note that we turned to psychological factors only as a *complementary* explanation for Romania's yet unconsolidated democracy. Social psychology cannot explain the success or failure of democratic consolidation on its own; however, it can provide a useful angle of analysis in unique situations like that of Romania. We can infer, based on comparisons to other CEE countries, that the mindset of Romanians is indeed less democratically inclined. The paper has also suggested possible explanations for why Romanians' mentality and social psychology is so different.

Second, with respect to the larger question regarding the nature of full-fledged democracy, it seems that full democratic consolidation cannot occur in the absence of a society's mental and psychological preparedness to embrace democracy. Moreover, democratic regimes where liberal norms, values, and modes of thinking have not been internalized by individuals are inherently flawed and fall under the category of "illiberal" democracies.

If considerations of social psychology and political culture enter the main stream of the democratization literature, they will have much bearing on the newly emerged or not so new democracies of Africa, Latin America, the Middle East, and Asia. Should these invisible factors be found to play a significant role in democratization, one puzzling question arises: are some countries doomed never to become democratic because of people's inability to learn or create an appropriate social representation of democracy? Though mindset and group psychology are fluid by nature, authors of democratization theories should not ignore such

variables because of the inherent difficulty of quantifying, measuring, analyzing, and interpreting them. They provide a richness and depth of understanding that other variables, though more parsimonious and elegant, may not be able to offer.

## Bibliography

- Barnes, Samuel H., and Janos Simon, eds., *The Postcommunist Citizen* (Tatabanya, Hungary: Alfadat-Press, 1998).
- Bordens, Kenneth S., and Irwin A. Horowitz, *Social Psychology* (Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Publishers).
- Dryzek, John S. and Leslie Templeton Holmes, eds., *Post-communist Democratization: Political Discourses across Thirteen Countries* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002).
- Dahl, Robert, *Polyarchy: Participation and Opposition* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1971).
- Marks, Gary and Larry Diamond, eds., *Reexamining Democracy: Essays in Honor of Seymour Martin Lipset* (Newbury Park, London, New Delhi: Sage Publications, 1992).
- Gallagher, Tom, *Modern Romania: The End of Communism, the Failure of Democratic Reform, and the Theft of a Nation* (New York: New York University Press, 2005).
- Gaus, Gerald, *The Modern Liberal Theory of Man* (London and New York: Crook Helm, St. Martin's Press, 1983).
- Grey, Robert D., ed., *Democratic Theory and Post-Communist Change* (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1997).
- Huntington, Samuel P., *The Third Wave: Democratization in the Late Twentieth Century* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1991).
- Kluegel, James R., David S. Mason, and Bernd Wgener, "The Legitimation of Capitalism in the Postcommunist Transition: Public Opinion about Market Justice, 1991–1996," *European Sociological Review*, vol. 15, no. 3, 251–283.
- Larsen, Knud S. et al., "Ideology and Identity: A National Outlook," *Journal of Peace Research*, vol. 32, no. 2 (1995), 165–179.
- Lijphart, Arend, "Comparative Politics and the Comparative Method," *American Political Science Review*, vol. 65, no. 3 (September 1971), 682–693.
- Linz, Juan, and Alfred Stepan, *Problems of Democratic Transition and Consolidation: Southern Europe, South America, and Postcommunist Europe* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996).
- Lipset, Seymour M., *Political Man: The Social Bases of Politics* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1981).



Matei, Sorin, "The Emergent Romanian Post-Communist Ethos: From Nationalism to Privatism," *Problems of Post-Communism* 51, 2 (March/April 1994): 40–47.

Duveen, G., and B. Lloyd, eds., *Social Representations and the Development of Knowledge* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990).

Pridham, Geoffrey, "Conflicting Conditions and Breaking with the Past: Historical Legacies and Political Learning in Transitions to Democracy," *Democratization*, vol. 7, no. 2 (Summer 2000), 36–64.

Przeworski, Adam, "Some Problems in the Study of Transition to Democracy," in Guillermo O'Donnell, Philippe Schmitter, and Laurence Whitehead, eds., *Transitions from Authoritarian Rule: Comparative Perspectives* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1986).

Przeworski, Adam, Michael Alvarez, Jose Antonio Cheibub and Fernando Limongi, "What Makes Democracies Endure?" *Journal of Democracy*, vol. 7, no. 1 (1996): 39–55.

Putnam, Robert, *Making Democracy Work: Civic Traditions in Modern Italy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993).

Rose, Richard, and William T. E. Mishler, "Mass Reaction to Regime Change in Eastern Europe: Polarization or Leaders and Laggards?" *British Journal of Political Science*, vol. 24, no. 2 (1994), 159–182.

Rustow, Dankwart A., "Transitions to Democracy: Toward a Dynamic Model," *Comparative Politics*, Vol. 2, No. 3 (April 1970), 337–363.

Samuels, Richard, "Comparing Theories of Democratic Support: Lessons from Post-Communist Europe," *Democratization*, vol. 10, no. 2 (Summer 2003): 105–120.

Schedler, Andreas, "What is Democratic Consolidation?" *Journal of Democracy*, vol. 9, no. 2 (1998): 91–107.

\_\_\_\_\_, "Measuring Democratic Consolidation," *Studies in Comparative International Development*, vol. 36, no. 1 (Spring 2001): 66–92.

Zakaria, Fareed, "The Rise of Illiberal Democracy," *Foreign Affairs*, vol. 76, no. 6 (November/December 1997).

*Barometrul de opinie publica 1999, 2004, 2005*, Open Society Foundation, available at [http://www.osf.ro/ro/detalii\\_program.php?id\\_prog=19](http://www.osf.ro/ro/detalii_program.php?id_prog=19).

*2006 Freedom in the World Report* (ratings only), Freedom House, 2006, available at <http://www.freedomhouse.org/research/>.

*2006 Nations in Transit Report*, Freedom House, 2006, available at <http://www.freedomhouse.org/research/>.

*2005 Freedom in the World Report*, Freedom House, 2005, available at <http://www.freedomhouse.org/research/>.

*Bulgaria: A Country Study*, Library of Congress, Federal Research Division, available at: <http://countrystudies.us/bulgaria/>.

*Corruption Perceptions Index 2005*, Transparency International, 2005, available at <http://www.transparency.org/cpi/2005/cpi2005.sources.en.html>.

*Poland: A Country Study*, Library of Congress, Federal Research Division, available at: <http://countrystudies.us/poland/>.

*What Is Social Psychology?*, Faculty of Psychology and Education, Vrije Universiteit, Amsterdam, available at <http://www.psy.vu.nl/fpp.php/departments/socialpsychology/extra1/>.

*World Values Survey*, International Network of Social Scientists, available at <http://www.worldvaluessurvey.org/services/index.html>.