

**AMERICAN POLITICAL SCIENCE IN  
POST-COMMUNIST EUROPE:**

**THE CASE OF ROMANIA**

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## I

Once upon a time, not that long ago, papers on the nature of political science in Romania all would begin something like this: As Comrade Ceausescu says, “The molding of the new man, the purposeful builder of the social system, is the greatest and most complex task, the loftiest responsibility and the revolutionary duty of honor of our communist party. That is why we should work in an organized manner in this domain, too, based on clear, scientific, far-reaching orientations.” [Ceausescu 1983, 113].

There was virtually no Romanian political science during the inter-war years, and the perversion of political science during the communist era. Under the banner of scientific socialism, instruction about politics functioned as a mechanism for training the party activists needed to occupy leadership positions in the state and state-run economy. Research about politics became a vehicle for announcing the superiority of dialectical and historical materialism. As it emerged from World War II, the Romanian Communist Party was quite small and under domination from Moscow. It was a major task to transform itself from messianic sect to ruling elite [Tismaneanu 2003].

Institutionally, during the late 1940s, the august Romanian Academy was abolished and replaced by a new academy, purged of “bourgeois” influences and responsive to official doctrine. The “Andrei Jdanov (Zhdanov) School for the Social Sciences” was established to prepare the new generation of party cadres. In the late 1950s, the school was merged with the “Stefan Gheorghiu Academy for Training and Development of Leadership Cadres,” founded in 1945 by the Central Committee of the Romanian Communist Party. Covering the range from short-term studies for specially selected individuals through full doctorate degrees for socialism instructors in higher education, Stefan Gheorghiu offered courses in fields such as Marxist theory, party organization, the history of workers’ movements, and socialist economic planning, and it remained the primary doctrinaire party training center through December 1989.

Romania experienced a brief period of ideological relaxation during the middle 1960s. Independence from strict Soviet domination, however, was soon accompanied by the restoration of theoretical rigidity, so that nothing parallel to the Czech rebellion could possibly threaten. In the 1970s, Elena Ceausescu was elected to the Romanian Academy and proclaimed as the nation’s leading scientist. A new institution, the “Academy of Political and Social Sciences” was established, under the direction of the Propaganda Division of the Central Committee, to centralize all research in related disciplines. Nicolae Ceausescu, awarded a doctorate in political science (1978), served as honorary president of the institution, allegedly as “a confirmation of his vast theoretical work” [Ceausescu 1983, 168]. At the same time, university departments in sociology and psychology were abolished, faculty released, and degrees rescinded. As Daniel Barbu, Dean of the Political Science Faculty at the University of Bucharest observes, “the official politics of social sciences shifted from supplying general orientation and providing casual censorship to direct involvement in research policies, programs, planning, tools, methods, and teams” [Barbu 2002, 276-77].

Beyond these institutional moves, the language of Romanian communism undermined systematic political study. Hypothetically, one can imagine a scientific socialism promoting teaching and research regarding the effects of collectivization, experiments in worker ownership, new attitudes towards empowerment, and changing relations in the workplace and community. Ceausescu, in fact, regularly would announce that there was no subject impenetrable to human understanding, and he would praise scientific, in-depth investigation regarding Romanian realities, the struggle to transform society, and the international working-class movement as essential to the theory and practice of communist construction. Of course, his words were not, and should not be taken seriously. In Romania, the purpose of scientific socialism was merely to affirm a simplistic version of dialectical and historical materialism, demonstrating “that the working people, its revolutionary, progressive and patriotic forces, ensured our society’s march forward. All important movements in the country’s life are linked to this struggle of the masses” [Ceausescu 1983, 94]. All dissent stems from those anti-social elements resistant to progressive trends. The party, he said, “would not allow under any pretext creations which are inspired from conceptions alien to the working class and socialist ideology” [Ceausescu 1983, 88]. Science is corrupted when its pronouncements are vacuous and its conclusions predetermined. So-called social scientific justifications unanimous in defense of the regime spread a thin veneer of ideology that is easily dismissed and that quickly casts doubt upon the academic discipline producing it.

Moreover, Romanian communist ideology increasingly diverged from Marxist-Leninist orthodoxy, issuing nationalist panegyrics in which the people united (rather than the proletariat) became the active force in revolutionary transformation and the state (rather than withering away) is a necessary, active presence in social development. “As a political instrument of the power of the whole people,” said Ceausescu, “the state is called upon to effectuate the party’s Programme of building a multilaterally developed socialist society and Romania’s advance toward communism” [Ceausescu 1983, 61]. History was re-written and previously disparaged writers were revived, in carefully edited versions, justified “scientifically” in terms of Romania’s unique achievements and essential position in the world. Extreme nationalism was a useful appeal in declaring independence from Soviet control (in contrast to previous party subordination) and in asserting territorial integrity (in contrast to past secessions of territory to the USSR). It was a valuable source of legitimacy given the insufficiency of material rewards amid growing economic scarcity. Yet Ceausescu’s nationalism was more than crass popular manipulation. It entailed the symbolic appropriation of themes already existing in the Romanian discourse, and it extended opportunities to intellectuals versed in this discourse to enter, albeit selectively, into the cultural life of the country [Verdery 1991].

No ideology is ever entirely monolithic; none ever commands universal allegiance. Yet resistance to Romania’s nationalist-communism was not essentially an intellectual’s opposition, articulating for example an alternative vision of national identity, democracy, and social development. Instead, it took the form primarily of popular cynicism and distrust. Students in the required classes on Marxism-Leninism, Bucharest-style, would echo the essential slogans using witty double-entendres, indicating their visible boredom and thinly disguised disbelief. Romanians became

expert at obedience with the body while the mind was somewhere else. The common joke was that the only person paying close attention at political lectures and party-dominated meetings were the ones reporting for the Securitate secret police. By the end, the words and institutionalized propaganda remained, but almost no one was listening. Given all this, it should not be found surprising, when the University in Cluj established in 1995 a new Faculty of Political and Administrative Science -- with classes to be taught in research methodology, democratic theory, Romanian institutions in comparative perspective, and international relations -- that a representative of the History Faculty would appear at its doorstep the morning after the new curriculum was published, angrily claiming that it was only scientific socialism revisited.

## II

Political science in Romania, post-1989, had to be constructed not merely from the ashes of a collapsed regime, but from a deep suspicion regarding the meaning and objectives attached to the enterprise, itself. I will argue that there were three distinct directions that emerged in the post-revolutionary period. The first represented a conscious return to the intellectual tradition that flourished during the inter-war period. Unfortunately, this was a tradition of the far right, opposed to rationality, liberalism, tolerance, and parliamentary democracy. Many of its advocates were tempted by fascism and certain among them went even further, giving explicit support to the "Iron Guard" Legionnaire movement.

Romania during the early decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century suffered economic dislocation and political instability. Boundaries remained insecure, democratic institutions lacked legitimacy, and the rural economy was slow to modernize. Predictably, many intellectuals gravitated toward a reactionary ideal, linking romantic nationalism with a celebration of the organic peasant community and a xenophobic condemnation of foreign (especially Jewish) corruptions. To the great national poet, Mihai Eminescu, for example, liberalism was a system that "transformed Romania into a quagmire into which the social sewage of the West and East is discharged" [Ioanid 1990, 31]. According to the nation's most famous historian, Nicolae Iorga, writing in defense of legitimate and pure Romanian ideals, "however high the dirty wave of profit-seekers, the soil is ours. And one day the wind will blow away the scum it has brought, and we shall remain" [Volovici 1991, 32].

Added to the mixture in the mid-1930s was a mystical element associated primarily with Nae Ionescu and his "Young Generation" of followers. Biological nationalism had asserted the integral connection between true Romanian blood and true Romanian ideals. The new generation of right-wing theorists assigned to their project a more exalted, messianic mission – to accomplish the spiritual, ethical, and cultural redemption of the national soul. The underlying themes were somewhat loosely connected and based on elementary philosophy, but they facilitated great, inspiring rhetoric. First, the right-wing project would help create the new man, who gives recognition to his subconscious and thereby is purified sufficiently to become authentic, adventurous, creative, primitive, disciplined, and loyal to the cause. Second, it would

create a new spirituality based on mythic visions and Orthodox religious metaphysics, sparking the flame of God against the creeping powers of darkness. Third, it would establish a new state form based on hierarchy and authority, in which meaningless (class) divisions would be transcended and subordinated to the natural leader, recognized by the mass and responsible to its unity and essence. At the root of this intellection direction were a series of simple dichotomies –organic versus synthetic, inspired versus rationalist, rustic versus cosmopolitan, idealist versus materialist, natural versus artificial. Typical among its advocates was Mircea Eliade (later renowned in the U.S. as a scholar of comparative religions), who wrote in his essay, "Why I Believe in the Victory of the Legionnaire Movement":

Whilst all revolutions are political, the Legionary revolution is spiritual and Christian. Whilst the aim of all contemporary revolutions is winning power by a social class or by a person, the supreme target of the Legionary revolution is, as the Captain has said, the salvation of the people, the reconciliation of the Romanian people with God. That is why the sense of the Legionary movement will lead not only to the restoration of the virtues of our people, to a valorous dignified and powerful Romania; it will also create a new man attuned to a new type of life in Europe [Volovici 1991, 85; Ioanid 1990, 146].

Although a revolt by Iron Guard fanatics failed in 1941, Romania nevertheless entered the Second World War as a "national Legionary state," led by Marshall Ion Antonescu and firmly committed to the Axis side. (Regarding the Romanian holocaust, in which more than a quarter million Jews died, see Butnaru [1992] and Ioanid [2000]; regarding the systematic efforts to falsify this history, see Braham [1998].)

During the communist era, these writers initially were banned. Some went to jail but many had emigrated and developed notable intellectual careers abroad. This distance eventually became an attraction, as Romanians sought to recover their sense of moral value and national pride. Ironically, few works by the inter-war romantic nationalists were readily available inside the country. Knowledge of their political positions still remains minimal. Reputation has been based more on their opposition to communism than a serious consideration of their ideas. Romanticism thus has remained primarily an émigré literature, without strong local roots. For example, the publication of Mihail Sebastian's diaries indicating the depth of antisemitic feelings among Young Generation intellectuals [Sebastian 2000] generated a more heated reaction in the pages of *Les Temps Modernes* than in Romanian journals. The professional-style assassination of Ioan Culianu, a former disciple of Eliade, in 1991 in the staff toilets of the Divinity School at the University of Chicago produced its greatest effect among international scholars [Manea 2003] and is minimally remembered by Romanians. The revival of the Orthodox religion in present-day Romania has led to some revival of mystical idealism. The difficulties of transition have fed the creation of an anti-western political party, Romania Mare, which espouses a version of xenophobic nationalism. Nevertheless, it would be incorrect to identify either of these as movements commanding serious current respect within the Romanian academic community.

The second direction for post-communist Romanian political science is also strongly nationalist, but explicitly critical and liberal in orientation. The revolution of 1989 was essentially a palace coup facilitated by mass protest [Galloway-Wylie 1991; Sweeney 1991; Codrescu 1992]. Romania during the dying years of communism produced little opposition literature (as in the Czech Republic) or opposition social movements (as in Poland). The fall of Ceausescu was experienced primarily as an individual catastrophe, as he was immediately executed and replaced by a National Salvation Front comprised largely by former members of the nomenclatura. The Front, declaring its dedication to democratic norms, then transformed itself into a political party that had since dominated most election results. Whereas some political scientists, especially those from the National School of Political Studies and Public Administration (consisting largely of members from the former Stefan Gheorghiu Academy), advised the new government, many others have been far more critical of the transition. Their writings, although empirical in approach, contain an implicit political context, anticipating that in-depth investigation will reveal the weakness of the prevailing regime and help instigate efforts at reform.

In terms of the political science profession, this approach has its greatest affinity to the area studies literature. It is focused upon national characteristics, yet is aware of inherent defects that can damage stable development. It is descriptive rather than comparative in methodology, yet is also strongly normative relative to an ideal version of the national project against which reality is judged somewhat deficient. Typical topics for research thus include: the weakness and inexperience of the political class that has assumed leadership in Romania; the organization of political parties, their lack of institutional penetration outside the capital, and their fragility and fluidity across post-communist elections; the persistence of corruption in most realms of politics and economics, deterring growth and undermining trust; the revival of religion and its effect on the modernization of beliefs; the slow emergence of civil society, the limits of engaged participation, and the low sense of personal efficacy; and the evolution of popular attitudes over time, including perceptions of social cleavages, changing evaluations of the parties and the growing sense of disillusionment. For those most interested in Public Administration, critical areas-studies research has focused upon increasing the powers and capacities of local governments. For those interested in International Relations, research has focused upon Romania's alleged strategic position in the world and the conditions that would justify its entry into NATO. Recently, a flurry of research has centered upon Samuel Huntington's assertion [1998] that the "clash of civilizations" runs directly through Romanian territory, differentiating the lands once dominated by Austria-Hungary from those once dominated by the Ottoman Empire. Although appealing to Transylvanian interests, there seems to be, at best, faint evidence for Huntington's claim.

Attention to national issues is hardly surprising, given the difficulties of Romania's transition to capitalist democracy and the visible failures of the post-communist governments. It is the literature that emerges from intellectuals seeking engagement with the practical world, who wish to express empirically their criticisms of

current affairs and to contribute to the social progress of a nation in distress. Yet, it must be noted, this is usually a somewhat thin literature, often lacking in theoretical sophistication and empirical technique. However, there is also a third direction in contemporary Romanian political science. It is the direction of so-called "pure social science," oriented primarily toward the international academic community and dedicated to advancing generalizable findings, in terms of which one can better comprehend Romanian reality.

This third direction can be found almost exclusively among the younger Romanian scholars, some of whom have trained in the U.S. or Western Europe or have been influenced by guest professors from those nations. Despite limited facilities, poor libraries, and slow web connections, they have decided to try to enter a wider conversation. The key assumption is that knowledge of the particular is unavailable apart from the general, that understanding is always in terms of systematic concepts, relationships, trends, and patterns, to which the individual observation corresponds or fails to correspond in various degrees. It is thus worthy of note that the first book for formal political science methodology translated into Romanian was King, Keohane and Verba's *Designing Social Inquiry* [2000], and that the "National School of Social Statistics," organized by Gabriel Badescu of Cluj, runs special courses filled by interested graduate students and junior faculty. To the proponents of this approach, studies focusing upon Romanian politics are undertaken as part of broad, cross-national and comparative research projects. The aspiration is to obtain the level of competence sufficient to be published in the best journals of the profession. It would be incorrect to assert that this has become the dominant direction within Romanian political science, but it certainly is the direction currently ascendant, led by many of the most vibrant, well-read, interesting young professors. The growing role for the social-science approach is indicated by the increasing institutionalization of political science as a free-standing discipline within the Romanian university system.

### III

By the time of communism's fall, Romania had 686 university students per 100,000 inhabitants, said to be the lowest percentage in Europe [Stan 1999, 510]. During the past decade, the university system has expanded and political science, as a new discipline, has contributed to that expansion. The departments now enroll thousands of students and employ over 100 instructors. As Livinia Stan notes, political science "has moved almost overnight from a barely tolerated undertaking to a necessary quest, from strict manipulation by the communist leadership to a plurality of different, and occasionally divergent viewpoints" [Stan 1999, 507]. Nevertheless, institutionalization has proved to be far more quantitative than qualitative. In general, salaries tend to be quite low, workloads are high, facilities are poor, and books are few. Many academic departments still function upon hierarchy more than collegiality, with hints of clientelism instead of meritocracy. Research, despite the opportunity provided by post-communism for creative and important study, has often been narrow and unimaginative. Academic controversies are still sometimes instigated by one's past relationship to the Ceausescu regime or to the current political parties. Publication is far too often directed to internal,

department-subsidized journals, with virtually no audience even among other Romanian political scientists. Efforts at cross-department cooperation are in their infancy. It is necessary, however, to give full appreciation to the enormous progress made in order to put present weaknesses in their proper perspective.

The National School of Political Studies and Public Administration, established in 1991, was the first post-communist institution to offer instruction in political science, providing two-year graduate training programs intended for political practitioners. Involvement with the past regime and the new governing party deterred close affiliation with the University of Bucharest. In 1995, it was reorganized into three departments – political science, public administration, and communications/public relations – and began to award undergraduate in addition to graduate degrees. By 2002, it listed 17 faculty members, an extensive curriculum of courses, and was planning to add a small Ph.D. program. The announced mission of the National School remains to create better specialists in government, policy-making, and management, and it is especially active placing its students within state occupations.

The University of Bucharest, the nation's leading university, began its own program in political science in 1991, but it was taught in French and emphasized legal studies and political philosophy. Reorganized in 1995, the Faculty is now comprised of three departments – political science, international relations, and public policy. It enrolls more than a thousand undergraduate and graduate students and offers a doctoral degree. It has, since 2001, published a journal, *Studia Politica*, and operates a separate Institute of Political Research under the supervision of the Dean, Daniel Barbu. Barbu explicitly maintains his opposition to the “current affairs dominant idiom” that operates without theoretical perspective and to political propaganda thinly disguised through the appearance of scholarly style. The task for political science is “to try to shed light on the major political problems facing Romania, and to revisit, after the demise of the totalitarian experience, the very foundations of democratic ideals and procedures” [Barbu 2002, 291-2].

The next generation for institutionalization of political science within Romanian universities began with the establishment in Fall 1995 of the Faculty of Political and Administrative Sciences at Babes-Bolyai University of Cluj-Napoca. Following a typical pattern, political science instruction had been initiated with a few classes offered within the Department of Contemporary History, Faculty of History and Philosophy. Its leap to independent status led to meteoric growth under the leadership of former Dean, Vasile Boari. Now admitting more than 300 students per year, the Cluj Faculty has four component departments – political science, public administration, journalism, and communications – and offers sections in Romanian and Hungarian. It strongly emphasizes empirical research and is widely acknowledged as methodologically the most sophisticated department in the country. The public administration section offers extension programs in Sfantu Gheorghe, Satu Mare, and Bistrita and was the first to break with the legal model of instruction, instead focusing upon analytic capacity and practical management skills. The Faculty maintains an extensive range of international

contacts and publishes a regular e-journal, *East*, as well as an occasional print journal, *Europolis*.

A political science department has existed since 1996 within the Faculty of Philosophy of Alexandru Ioan Cuza University of Iasi, which largely emphasizes political philosophy. Articles are published within the Faculty journal, *Sociologie-Politologie*. Political science sections were created in 1998 at the University of Oradea and within the Law and Administration Faculty of Lucian Blaga University of Sibiu. More impressive is the political science department established in 1999 by the University of the West in Timisoara, as part of the Faculty of Political Science, Philosophy, and Communication. Explicitly modern in orientation, it proclaims an interest in instructing students in critical thinking and analytic methods. Although still relatively small, the department promotes a research agenda emphasizing human rights and multi-cultural understanding. In recent years, political science departments have also been created at many of the newly-formed private universities, although few of these have hired a sufficient number of their own instructors. It is also necessary to mention, as falling within the category of political science, a number of commercial polling and consulting firms, some of which have attained quite high levels of sophistication.

An across-university association, the Romanian Association of Political Science, had been founded in 1968, providing superficial international legitimacy while maintaining strict party allegiance. The organization, reconstituted after 1989, still exists on paper but is effectively dead. A new association, The Romanian Society of Political Science, was established in January 2000 by junior professors and graduate students from a number of universities. While still struggling to secure cooperation from more senior scholars, the new society has effectively enrolled over 100 members, organized four annual conferences, received a welcome letter of friendly relations from the APSA, and awards a prize for the best paper presented at the annual conference. With assistance from the Civic Education Project, it publishes a peer-reviewed journal in English, *The Romanian Journal of Society and Politics*, which has had contributions from both national and foreign scholars interested in Romanian politics. Similarly notable as a cross-university effort, the Romanian Academic Society recently has recognized the importance of political science research and sponsored a peer-reviewed journal, the *Romanian Journal of Political Science*, published twice annually and devoted to theory-grounded empirical work especially in comparative politics, public policy, political economy and political psychology.

Among the most important contributions to the construction of modern political science in Romania was Social Science Curriculum Development project, funded by USIA and administered jointly by IREX and the ACLS. Founded on the assumption that progress diffuses from one leading center, the project directed an enormous amount of money between 1996 and 1999 toward the Faculty of Political and Administrative Science of Babes-Bolyai University in Cluj-Napoca. For example, prior to the SSCD program, the new Faculty had only four computers almost no useful software; by its end, there were 104 computers (54 for student access), three servers, two scanners, eight printers, and two distance-learning cameras, most of which were purchased with

earmarked SSCD funds. Prior to the SSCD program, the Faculty library contained a dozen or so books, most donated by a visiting Fulbright lecturer; by its end, the library contained approximately 3,000 books, was managed by a university librarian, maintained circulation records and a reserve shelf (King-Sum-Cain 1999). More essential than physical resources, the program promoted intellectual development. It helped train instructors through research grants and sponsored visits to U.S. universities. It used consultants to help build a coherent curriculum that is thematic within each year of study and incorporates methodological research skills alongside exposure to the main theories in the field. Most valuable of all, it hired junior U.S. professors to spend a year or two as members of the Cluj Faculty, co-teaching courses with Romanian instructors, advising regarding Faculty operations, and generally encouraging higher standards and a more professional outlook. The SSCD program gave legitimacy to the empirically-oriented political science department being developed in Cluj. No reform effort ever fulfills its best expectations. The new-created Faculty, not unexpectedly, gave somewhat more emphasis to institutional entrenchment and the quantity of physical infrastructure than to quality achievements. Its leadership could have pursued somewhat better cooperation and collaboration with other departments in other universities. Yet the trajectory for the Faculty is now firmly established, the skills of its graduates and young professors are apparent, and Romanian scholars have begun to speak with respect about the “Cluj school” of social science.

The institutionalization of Romanian political science is thus secure, which is quite remarkable for approximately one decade of existence. Whether as the lead department of an independent Faculty (as in Bucharest or Cluj) or as an integral component to a Faculty with more extensive coverage (as in Iasi or Timisoara), political science departments in Romanian universities have hired professors, established curricula, and become quite popular with students. The next challenge is to bring academic substance up to the same level. Essentially, there are two broad sets of barriers to be overcome. The first set is a consequence of the absence of resources and experience (this is the main emphasis in Stan 1999). For example, given the novelty of the subject to Romania yet its rapid growth, many of the instructors hired have training equivalent to second or third year graduate students in the U.S. The range of courses listed in the catalogue is impressive, but their content often falls short of what is advertised. There are now, at best, only a handful of Romanian scholars in the field with the skills, theoretical and methodological, to publish in refereed international journals, and there is little internal incentive for obtaining such skills and such prestige. Low salaries often force instructors to supplement their incomes in ways that interfere with professional development -- even by teaching for more than one Faculty simultaneously. Classes are overcrowded, in part because the Romanian university system awards funding based upon enrollment numbers, plus Faculties are now permitted to accept paying students who are qualified for admissions but do not obtain government stipends. Teaching often occurs in large lectures, with instructors reading their notes aloud and without opportunity for student discussion; but this is largely a function of the lack of available textbooks, which anyway are expensive far beyond the students' ability to purchase. The problem, allegedly, is not the lack of will. In fact, one can be impressed by the achievements of many Romanian political scientists, maintaining a full intellectual

life despite objective constraints, and one can hope that those constraints will ease somewhat in the decade to come.

The second set of barriers, however, is more fundamental and stems from an enduring Romanian academic culture. Regarding corruption, Romania ranks 77<sup>th</sup> among the 102 countries included in the 2002 Transparency International survey; expectations of corruption pervade most areas of social life [Transparency 2002; King 2003]. Rumors still exist about certain university departments that sell degrees and professors who expect gifts in exchange for passing grades on theses. Less dangerous but nevertheless problematic are clientele networks that tend to favor those connected -- with jobs, promotions, conference participation, or publications in department journals. One of the deterrents to the establishment of refereed grants and journals, for example, is the fear of bias in the selection process. Equally bothersome is the feeling among certain senior professors that they are automatically deserving of high prestige and thus deference from others. I once observed the Dean of a Political Science Faculty, at a conference at his own university in which there were three other presenters listed for the same panel session, speak for the entire two hour period without anyone daring to interrupt. Western academic norms put great value on collegiality, peer review, professional judgment, and open competition among ideas. Rules against plagiarism insist that the ideas presented in a paper must be one's own or else carefully cited. This approach is still somewhat new to Romania and entails a degree of challenge to conventional modes of operation. Liberal words are articulated but not quite matched in practice.

In addition, the fragility of Romanian democracy, discord over future political direction, and lingering angers regarding past allegiances can insert an ideological dimension to academic debates, infusing them with personal or institutional rancor. The regional identity of the main universities and their competition for status limits voluntary cooperation. As Daniel Barbu concludes:

On balance, the Romanian science of politics suffers from a number of defects, which undermine its scientific credentials and academic integrity: the failure to eliminate inadequate theory, terminological confusion, an excess of descriptivism and current-affairism, and the enticement to resort to ideological intimidation. These pathologies are not only germane to the maladies that have afflicted the larger body of social sciences twenty years ago, but they mimic the very diseases of post-communist politics [Barbu 2002, 295].

Generational change and international exposure are working increasingly to transform certain of the inherited norms of Romanian academic culture. This transformation is led by those departments, including political science, which are considered most modern. Engagement by Romanian political scientists in reform of their society thus extends beyond the subjects they study, the classes they teach, and the advice they deliver, to the individual behavior and collective conduct of affairs deemed appropriate as they construct their academic discipline.

## IV

The task that remains is to account for the significant popularity of political science in Romanian higher education. It would be nice to announce that the primary cause has been the relevance of the research, the seriousness of the findings, and the intellectual vibrancy of the faculty. As is typical of most phenomena, motivations are often far more prosaic. Ideally, one would conduct a survey of actual and prospective political science students, possibly using panel methodology returning to the same respondents before, during, and after their studies. In the absence of systematic data, however, I can supply only personal impressions.

First, the university admissions process has favored the growth of political science departments. Romanian high school students specialize early and must demonstrate very high skills in order to be competitive for places at the main universities. Students seeking entry into Faculties such as mathematics, medicine, engineering, languages, and informatics will have completed a number of courses that Americans would categorize as intermediate college-level, and many have arranged paid tutorials in their subject area outside of normal school hours. Political science, as a new discipline, is not taught at the high school level. It therefore provides an opportunity for university admission to talented students who have not already chosen to specialize, who were not attracted by the options available, or who have discovered that their specialized skills rank just below the very top group.

Second, unemployment in Romania remains high and university graduates are expected to work in the field in which they take their degree. There is little sense, as exists in the U.S., that universities provide general training and that the job market is encouraging and flexible. Romanian democracy has opened new areas for potential employment, especially with the political parties and local governments. A share of students work while enrolled in university, often having found jobs through friends, relatives, or the patronage networks that still prevail in much of Romanian industry. For those students with connections within the political system, a political science degree offers a useful credential. Yet, in addition, because of its historic novelty, there is the feeling among students that this new academic specialization will result in new types of occupational opportunities. Those responsible for the expansion of political science departments certainly believe this to be true, and a number of grant proposals have been written wishing to test this belief more rigorously.

Third, social idealism is a prerogative of youth. Disappointment in the post-communist transition is widely accompanied by a faith that things eventually will improve, that Romania will again take its place among the leading countries of Central and Eastern Europe. The common expression is that it will require a generation or two, for the residues of the past to disappear and a new leadership class to emerge. To students, this often translates into a sense of obligation; they must prepare themselves for the responsibilities incumbent upon the first post-revolutionary generation. Romania has had minimal experience with democracy. There is little understanding of its practice, implications, and effects upon society. Yet there is a strong belief, among social

idealists, that democratic institutions need to be deepened in order for progress to continue. This easily gets linked to the belief, a product of long tradition, that fundamental change originates with the state rather than the private sector. (A popular Romanian saying is that a fish spoils starting from the head.) Political science, as a discipline that studies democracy, the state, and the regulations by which society is governed, holds a natural attraction to students dedicated to the reform project.

Fourth, political science is considered one of the most pro-Western of the academic disciplines. It has been promoted by U.S. and European visiting scholars. Its main journals are written in English. It provides opportunities for travel, study, and conferences abroad. Its appearance in Romanian universities occurred after 1989 and is associated with political changes of the new era. There might be little prior understanding among entering students regarding the nature of the discipline, the subjects that will be encountered and the methodologies employed, but there is a strong feeling that it will be modern and therefore relevant and useful. If the East has failed and the West is prospering, then by definition there must be something to be learned and copied from Western knowledge. Despite the partial rise of a new xenophobia based upon the frustrations of transition, the dominant belief is that Romania's future lies in closer connections westward, indicated by potential membership in the EU and NATO. Political science -- entailing the study of newly imported governing institutions and practices; emphasizing words such as freedom, democracy, participation and choice -- has become a somewhat trendy field of study. The contrast is with the academic field of economics, which has a different inherited reputation as it was taught under communism and was not associated with the most ambitious among students, who were preparing for secure careers as accountants in state-run industries.

Finally, and certainly not unimportant among reasons for the popularity of the field, political science departments in Romanian universities are doing their job reasonably well. The Faculty in Cluj, for example, was among the first in the university to require syllabi for all courses, to incorporate discussion in classes and to have grades based on more than a final oral examination, to establish training in research skills, to facilitate computer access for students, and to provide mailboxes and offices for instructors. By average age of instructors, political science departments tend to be among the youngest, with many still working to complete their Ph.D. This is logical since field is new and the departments are among the latest to be created. The younger instructors -- despite very low pay, a huge workload, and limited facilities -- often bring to the classroom a degree of enthusiasm for the subject, a willingness to venture with teaching methods, and a commitment to students. One can only hope that the forces leading to disillusionment are restrained, that new sources of academic energy can be found, and that the example set by certain of the younger instructors more and more becomes the general norm.

## V

Romanian political science is still in its infancy. It has successfully been institutionalized in university departments, established a fledgling national association, and generated a degree of fashionable popularity among students. Many difficulties

remain -- not uncommon within the Romanian university system -- especially concerning low salaries, administrative disorganization, overcrowding, and poor facilities. Library and computer access certainly needs to be improved. Yet the main challenge confronting Romanian political science in the years ahead will be quality. Despite limited resources, the members of the discipline must increasingly produce papers capable of winning recognition from the wider, international academic community. During the first decade of existence, Romanian political scientists were favored by earmarked grants and largely were content to publish results in non-refereed journals subsidized by their home departments. It is now necessary for them to take the next step toward professionalization. In the process, they will achieve a more profound understanding of democratic politics and make a more meaningful contribution through their teaching, service, and research. There is much the study of comparative politics can learn from the integration of Romanian scholarship, regarding the transition from authoritarian rule, the consolidation of democratic practices, the stability of multi-ethnic societies, the strategies of anti-corruption, etc. The future depends largely upon the younger scholars, many of whom are pursuing training outside of Romania and have the skills and vision necessary to carry development to the next level.

Does this represent, as the title for these panels suggests, the spread of “American” political science? I am not especially sure what the concept means. Is there an American science of chemistry or physics or microbiology? It might be that social science is different, yet then one would have to specify quite clearly the basis upon which the claim is made.

At one time, Romanian scholarship looked almost exclusively toward France. The growth of its political science, instead, has been influenced considerably by U.S. consultants and U.S. training programs. Yet U.S. intellectuals have not been alone in this effort. Support has also come from Western Europe, for example through the TEMPUS program of the EU and the Erasmus network of European universities. Most Romanian political science departments have established friendly exchanges with an array of companion departments from universities in many countries. A number of graduate students are receiving degrees from the Central European University in Budapest. To be sure, there is now less interpretive discourse and more attention to the rigorous formulation of propositions and to plausible testing. It would be incorrect, however, to claim that the empirical approach to studying politics is narrowly “American” in focus. And it certainly strains credibility to contend that careful research design and logical inference from data are methodological precepts arising merely from cultural imperialism.

A somewhat different argument might highlight the concepts inherent to the propositions of political science. Few today would insist upon the strict separation of “is” and “ought” statements, dividing firmly empirical from normative analysis. The words used by political scientists – i.e., tyranny and dictatorship, democracy and participation, war and peace -- are not neutral in their connotations. There can be no non-normative social science because values matter to people in communities, and concepts themselves carry values. Moreover, the normative implication of these basic concepts is

not missed by Romanian scholars. Contemporary political science is seen implicitly as a “Western” discipline, by virtue of the categories generally employed and the research agenda advanced. It is also implicitly internationalist, in opposition to threatening xenophobia, by the importance given to comparative research. All of this has helped to make the field especially attractive to many Romanian scholars and students. I fail to see, however, how this entailed normative orientation can be presented as uniquely “American.”

A more subtle argument might emphasize instead the theoretical approach used by scholars within a given country and the interpretations of political events they tend to find most plausible. As David McKay contends, “there are different types of democracy and therefore different types of political science” [McKay 1988, 1054]. Cultural perspectives affect individual understanding, and thereby can have an impact upon the theoretical predisposition of professors. This might possibly be the case for the American practice of political science although I am skeptical, certainly regarding any strong version of the argument. The causal connections to make this sort of claim are delicate and hard to sustain. One must avoid the ecological fallacy, attributing characteristics pertaining to a population as a whole to particular individuals existing within that population. Moreover, one would need to show that any alleged national academic predisposition (e.g., toward individualism in explanation) is fundamental and dogmatic rather than merely preliminary and tentative. In order for there to be a distinctly “American” approach to political science, sitting in contrast to other valid approaches to the discipline, the theoretical propositions offered by Americans must be found internally homogeneous and externally heterogeneous. For this to occur, American practitioners must find a uniform source for their ideas and be impermeable to reformulation given alternate perspectives arising from “foreign” approaches. They must resist isolating remaining differences and identifying their empirical implications for potential testing. They must persist with their perspective as the only progressive research program imaginable even after more cosmopolitan scholars become convinced that the evidence is controversial and that interesting avenues of inquiry also lie elsewhere.

This could well be true of specific individuals within American political science, but I find it hard to believe it is an attribute sweepingly applicable to the entire discipline, comprised of thousands of professors at hundreds of U.S. universities, or to its main schools of thought. Social science might function differently than physical science, but there are rules of evidence that should limit the effect of potential cultural bias. My personal belief is that the attempt to isolate some particular “American” flavor to the conduct of political science will fail. Simply look at the intellectual differences among the past four or five presidents of the American Political Science Association. American political science is too diverse for uniform characterization, the life experiences of its scholars are too extensive and the ideas generally debated are sufficiently plentiful to resist causal reductionism to national intellectual tradition.

It is true, however, that contemporary political science has thrived in the U.S., and that U.S. scholarship has largely dominated the field. (It is the reason why this weekend we are celebrating its history and considering its achievements.) Romanian academics,

like those in most other countries, have felt the influence. This is not the same as becoming “Americanized.” Moreover, with regard to the products of Romanian political science, the main problem is not that it has copied unthinkingly American theoretical biases, but instead that it has barely begun to attach relevant social science theories to the data uncovered and the methodologies learned. To the extent that intellectual “copying” occurs, it is largely a function of the scarcity of books and thus limited exposure to the range of issues that have sparked controversy. In fact, it is precisely this condition that U.S. and other foreign consultants have most sought to combat. The lack of present sophistication is the greatest challenge confronting the Romanian political science. Americanization should not be confused with efforts to increase the sophistication of Romanian scholarship, although American examples can be used to show how greater sophistication might be achieved and American academic visits can aid in development. It is more accurate to be impressed with how far Romanian political science has come, given the novelty of the discipline and the paucity of available resources, than to be concerned about the imposition of any single, national model of political science research.

Ultimately, political science instruction in Romania fosters an independence from official state pronouncements, a willingness to question established authority, and a moral attachment to evidence in evaluating proposed claims. It encourages investigation into the operations of government and its means for advancing fundamental values. It teaches various nations have had to confront roughly similar problems and go about their solution in different ways. It promotes a pragmatic approach to constitutional and policy reform. It highlights the importance of open conversation, the public nature of knowledge, and the need to expose initial prejudices to rigorous testing. It helps to establish a spirit of critical inquiry, fostering attitudes of skepticism, autonomy, and personal empowerment. As such, contemporary political science is a dimension of Romanian democratic education and contributes to the further construction of its democratic society.

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American and pro-American liberals, for their part, were proud to associate liberalism, routinely ridiculed by leftist critics as an ideology geared towards maintaining the status quo, with the romance of emancipating change. In eastern and central Europe as a whole, euphoria at communism's collapse created the expectation that other radical improvements were in the offing. Some thought it would suffice for communist officials to quit their posts in order for central and eastern Europeans to wake up in different, freer, more prosperous and, above all, more western countries. We still need to ask in any case why it would find such politically combustible material in central and eastern Europe, given that virtually no immigrants actually arrived in these countries. Facebook. Twitter.