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**A COMPARATIVE APPROACH TO AMERICAN AND
BALKAN POLITICAL CULTURES FROM A ROMANIAN
PERSPECTIVE**

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T.C. YÜKSEK ÖĞRETİM BAKANLIĞI
KURUM KAYIT VE ARAMA BÜYÜKLERİ

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ABSTRACT

The American culture has been constantly placed by both American and foreign scholars in a close relation with the political foundations of that society. Starting with Alexis de Tocqueville, illustrious scientists have emphasized the strength of the civic bond in that culture and its centrality in the development of the American society. These aspects were to be admirably cumulated in the concept of civic culture, as the political culture of democracy, by Gabriel Almond and Sydney Verba in their reputed *Civic Culture - Political Attitudes And Democracy In Five Nations*. The United States were to be given as an example of a participative political culture and this impression did not change until Robert D. Putnam managed to demonstrate with a metaphor now famous that Americans were more and more 'bowling alone', meaning that the civic bond was loosening. In this paper, I approach these theories from the double perspective of, on one hand, statistical data on similar developments in Romania and, on the other hand, a different understanding of the very word *political* in the syntagma *political culture*. Consequently, this thesis aims at studying the results of a different interpretation of indicators of value regarding the American political culture when fundamental concepts involved are judged in substantially modified practical and theoretical contexts.

TÜRKÇE ÖZET

Amerikan kültürü, hem Amerikalı hem de yabancı bilim adamları tarafından Amerikan toplumunun siyasi temellerine yakın biçimde konumlandırılmıştır. Alexis de Tocqueville ile başlamak üzere pek çok ünlü bilim adamı bu kültürdeki medeniyet (civic) yapıtaşını ve Amerikan kültürünün gelişiminde oynadığı merkezi rolün üzerinde durmuştur. Bu açılardan, demokrasinin siyasi kültürü Gabriel Almond ve Sydney Verba tarafından yazılan *Civic Culture-Political Attitudes And Democracy In Five Nations* adlı eserde başarılı biçimde ifade edilmiştir. Amerika Birleşik Devletleri katılımcı siyasi kültürün örneği olarak görülmüş ve bu anlayış Robert D. Putnam'ın deyişiyle medeniyet yapıtaşının (civic bond) gevşemeye başladığı anlamına gelen Amerikalıların gittikçe “yalnız bowlingçi” haline geldiğini belirtmesine kadar da değişmemiştir. Bu çalışmada, söz konusu teorilere; bir taraftan Romanya'daki benzer gelişmelere ilişkin istatistiksel veriler, diğer yandan siyasi kültürdeki ‘siyasi’ terimine farklı yaklaşımlar olmak üzere iki ayrı perspektiften yaklaşılacaktır. Sonuç olarak, bu tez bazı temel kavramlar bağlamında, pratik ve teorik bağlamda önemli derecede değiştirilmek suretiyle ele alındığında Amerikan siyasi kültürünün değer göstergeleri ve bunların farklı yorumlanmasıyla ortaya çıkan sonuçları irdelemeyi amaçlamaktadır.

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Dragoş Constantin MATEESCU

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INTRODUCTION

The study of the American culture and literature in various universities that I have had the honor to visit is focused primarily on the approach to literature as the main channel of expression of a particular culture. However, few university departments of the kind seem to give much attention to that aspect of the American culture under which is not surprisingly most known – the political culture. The explanation for such a situation is relatively simple: the systematic study of the political aspects of a given culture has started within the departments of political science at most probably the same universities throughout the world, sometimes just a few doors away down the same floor. As a bachelor of arts in political science, I shall try then here an approach to this subject but at the same time I warn the reader that this will not be done in the traditional way. I have chosen the comparative approach to the Romanian and American political cultures for various reasons among which ranks high what I consider to be a misunderstanding or, better said, a misinterpretation of the concept the political *per se* in the academic literature in a historical perspective. I believe that a comparison of the political cultures in question will be interesting also because it is about comparing the culture *exporting* the idea of democracy as developed within its political system over the last two centuries, that is, the United States, with the culture *importing*, starting with 1989, the same idea of democracy, that is, the Romanian culture. How much could the American idea of democracy gain ground in a former communist society might be of interest to Americans and students of the American culture. Moreover, it might also be of tremendous interest to see how is that exported product called political culture at work in a society in transition which hears now, after a history of continuous conflict and few époques of peace suggestively denominated by historians as *Pax Romana*, *Pax Byzantina*, *Pax Ottomana*, or *Pax Comunista*, the promise of a democratic *Pax Americana*. Since the Romanian culture cannot be understood as separated from its Balkan space, many references will be made here to these aspects.

In 1989, a Francis Fukuyama probably enthusiastic about the wind of change in Eastern Europe announced in a famous article in *National Interest* that history had ended

with the final victory of liberal democracy over its last historical rivals, fascism and communism. (Fukuyama, 1989: 3-18). The academic reaction to his hasty prophecy was so virulent that he had to write and publish a few years later a book in order to defend his theory. However, the American political scientist was right in many respects and the significance of that indubitable victory of liberal democracy, in spite of probably not signifying also the end of ideological battles, was still one to be honored. For the Romanian people, the year of 1989 means not only the end of the communist regime, but also the end of what everybody in that country hoped it was the last authoritarian regime in country's history. Practically, Romania has never experienced a truly democratic rule in the almost one and a half century since the establishment of the state bearing this name in 1859, when the Romanian Principalities of Moldova and Wallachia were unified under the rule of one elected prince, Alexandru Ioan Cuza.

However, when, in 1989, the Romanian people came out in the streets of Bucharest, Timișoara, Sibiu, Brașov and other major cities to demonstrate against the Nicolae Ceaușescu totalitarian regime, they shouted slogans in which they demanded political rights associated with democracy. Of course, as it will be pointed out throughout this study, the prestige of democracy was well established long before the communists took over the rule of the Romanian government in 1947, but those people had never experienced it. The only knowledge most Romanians had about democracy before 1989 was achieved indirectly, from the stories told by those who were fortunate enough to travel to the Western Europe, or from the Voice of America, Radio Free Europe, or BBC radiobroadcasts in Romanian language. Most scholars approaching this sudden enthusiasm for democracy agree nowadays that it can be explained only as an option for something that *must have been better*, in those people's minds, than the humiliating condition in which the population was living in the communist block. 1989 was, therefore, the meeting year of an Eastern Europe breaking the wall of their totalitarian communist regimes and a Western Europe more or less ready to welcome the East in economic terms, but undoubtedly happy to see such a historical development taking place in an Old Continent ravaged by too many thousands of years of bloody conflicts.

However, the democracy that was soon to be adopted by the political class, too, was no more a purely West European product, as it used to be before 1947, with French

EC YUNESKO & ETHN KUNSLAR
BULGARIANISTON MEMBERS

and British features. It was a product 'made in America' and successfully implemented in the Western Europe, too, during the times of the Cold War as an alternative regime to the socialism build in the Soviet Union. Finally, that long chanted slogan at the end of World War II, 'Vin americanii!!'¹, was turning reality right under people's eyes. This is how it happened that the first contact Romanians had with the American culture was, after Hollywood, not with its consumerist, or military aspects, but with its political component, with democracy as *exported* by the United States. Since then, many things changed and history took its more or less silent course. Democratic upheavals in the East were to be directed, of course, toward the accession of those countries in the European Union with the fulfillment of the political and economic criteria for the accession. Two changes in government took place democratically through peaceful elections in Bucharest, Yugoslavia disappeared, Soviet Russia is history, and, very important, most of East European countries see their reform efforts paid back with their acceptance in the old security structure of the West, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, while accession in the European Union for most of them, including Romania, is only a matter of a few years. But all these upheavals have been marked by the understanding of democracy and the democratic regime as developed in the practice of the American government for more than two hundred years now and gradually accepted in the Western Europe in many aspects.

One of the essential concepts that came along with this massive cultural exchange between America and Europe was, indeed, the concept of *political culture*. It is an academic product almost exclusively Anglo-Saxon in its beginnings, and denominates, as defined by the American scholars we shall discuss in the first chapter, a set of attitudes towards the political system and the individual as part of the political system. These attitudes presuppose, of course, orientations usually placed in three main categories: cognitive, affective, and evaluative. In the academic tradition of America, all these attitudes and orientations are conceived of as perfectly quantifiable and measurable. Millions of tables and charts populate the literature in this realm of interpretation

¹ After turning the military effort against Hitler's forces in 1944, the country was to fear even more from the unstoppable invasion of the Red Army. In that context, people's favorite slogan was 'Vin americanii!', which in English means "The Americans are coming!" and could be heard as an optimistic slogan anytime the pessimistic would warn about the 'red threat';

nowadays, and political scientists seem to be able to offer x-ray-type of analyses of almost all attitudes people manifest in the public or private realm of the society. Statistics abound, prognoses are guiding elements for domestic and foreign policies. The concept of political culture *per se* was the result of adoption by the behaviorist political theory of concept of culture as elaborated in Anglo-Saxon anthropology of the second half of the nineteenth century with the initial purpose of explaining the primitive societies. The transfer of the concept to the political science occurred at the initiative of the developmental movement in the 1960s, the main purpose being the identification of an ideal formula of development in itself, related especially to the secularization of culture.² The studies that we shall come across throughout this paper are therefore rooted in that age of civic explosion after the World War II, a time when the world was rediscovering itself.

I have structured this paper in three chapters. The first will introduce the concepts of civil society, political culture and other related ones as developed within the American and Romanian academic environments, along with the results of researches done with the use of those concepts in both the United States and Romania. The studies of Gabriel Almond, Sydney Verba, and Robert D. Putnam will serve as a necessary starting point of my research. The second chapter represents a philosophical attempt at redefining the concept of 'political' as a key one for understanding political culture as such on the basis of the concept of Being elaborated by Martin Heidegger and never fully incorporated, in my opinion, by the political thought. I demonstrate that such an effort is justified since it places not only political culture but also history itself under a different perspective. With that new perspective at hand I pass then in the third conclusive chapter to a reexamination of the two political cultures as approached in the beginning but seen, this time, from the historical perspective achieved following the philosophical inquiry and by employing the criterion that the concept of the political becomes after that same inquiry.

One of the main ideas that the reader will come in contact with in the following pages is that political participation is in decline in virtually all democracies in the world. Most studies affirm that among other causes for such a decline, the mere achievement of

² For a detailed analysis see Parvulescu, Cristian, "Dilemmas Of Pluralist Democracy: The Public Good Of Which Public?" in Peter Koslowski (ed.), *Individual Liberty And Democratic Decision-Making*, J. C. B. Mohr, Tubingen, 1987;

the initial goals of the respective civic movements stands as a logical explanation for that decline. In other words, after a civic action group manages to impose its viewpoint within the political society and its echo reaches, therefore, its apex, the civic engagement on behalf of those that are part in the respective civic action group most probably declines naturally. In this paper I try to demonstrate that things are not as simple as they look at a first glance. When analyzing the same phenomenon in a country in transition to democracy like Romania, it becomes obvious that people there become too soon disappointed with the political system in place, in spite of highly appreciating democracy as value. The same can be said about the Americans' attitudes toward the political as such. My main question being 'what is behind the decline?', I tried to reach an answer not by simply analyzing one more time the results of others' research. My option in this paper was, instead, to try and elaborate a different perspective, a different angle from which, when looking again at the same picture, the decline in question to come to reveal deeper meanings. Consequently, what resulted can be considered now only a proposal for a new perspective. Hence, whether the readers will appreciate or even accept it does not depend strictly on understanding but, instead, it is a question of perception.

CHAPTER I. TWO POLITICAL CULTURES – A COMPARATIVE APPROACH

1. 1. CIVIL SOCIETY

American hegemony and influence in the world is manifest, in the words of Zbigniew Brzezinski, under four crucial aspects of its power: the military, economic, technological, and cultural components. *“It is the combination of all four that makes America the only comprehensive global superpower.”* (Brzezinski, 1997: 24). The cultural aspect of the American strength is one that scholars tend to deal with in terms of political culture and this is not accidental. The very establishment of the United States of America was an unprecedented political act. As Edmund Morgan points out, James Madison, when being confronted with the locally oriented representatives at the Constitutional Convention of 1774, tried to promote the idea of an American people being above state interests as the only solution for creating a viable union. He understood the need for “a genuine national government, resting for its authority not on the state governments and not even on the peoples of the several states considered separately, but on an American people, a people who constituted a separate and superior entity, capable of conveying to a national government an authority that would necessarily impinge on the authority of the state governments.”(Morgan, 1989: 267). The title of Morgan’s book, *Inventing People – The Rise Of Popular Sovereignty In England And America*, is suggestive of the profound political nature of the birth of the American nation. The American culture is to a larger extent political in essence than other national cultures at least because America was in itself a grand experiment in which people, even if not believing in it at first, gradually took pride of being part of such a daring endeavor. Even nowadays ordinary Americans enumerate among the values which they consider American and that they are proud of mostly political values, as it will be often seen in this chapter. Social and particularly political scientists nowadays agree upon one central aspect: the centrality of the concept of civil society for the understanding of the political culture of a nation. One simply cannot talk nowadays about political culture without a profound analysis of the civil society within which that very culture is manifest. *The political culture ‘happens’ in the civil society.*

Up to the end of the Cold War, the political discourse in America was dominated by the attempt at defining itself as opposite to the discourse of various foes, most of them authoritarian regimes ranging from the economically oppressive British kingdom at the time of the American Revolution to the Fascist or Communist regimes of twentieth century Europe. After the Cold War ended with the triumph of liberal democracies from the West over the totalitarianism emanating from the Soviet Union and the very collapse of that adversary state, the concept of *civil society* has become a need and a reality within the American political discourse and consequently, as somebody suggested, “It is almost impossible to read an article on foreign or domestic politics without coming across some mention of the concept.” (Zakaria, 1995: 1). Politicians in the United States have come to take civil society seriously and give more and more attention in their speeches to that common (community) space within which “Americans make their homes, sustain their marriages, raise their families, hang out with their friends, meet their neighbors, educate their children, worship their god.”³ However, in spite of being an idea with very old roots that can be traced in the writings of the ancient philosophers, scholars of various orientations point out that, especially since Marx imposed his own interpretation of Hegel, the usage of the concept as such faced a serious decline.⁴ The transition of former Soviet societies to democracy is deemed ‘responsible’ for the reappearance of the concept in the political discourse as crucial for the credibility of the transitional process itself. It was by means of a veritable export of Western political values that the concept of civil society came to be understood in the East, including in the former communist states in the Balkans. And it is still perceived there a Western idea. Whether it is perceived at the same time as alien or not, is subject of much debate which, however, will not be broached here. However, it is within this political context, marked by the civil society as a needed political instrument, that scholars have re-introduced a vocabulary of civil society and community into American political discourses starting especially with the 1950s, in the aftermath of World War II. At that time, the academic world was dominated, as we shall see in this paper, too, by an overwhelming optimism regarding the superiority of the

³ The US Senator is notorious for his sharp views in the field. These remarks have been selected from Senator Bill Bradley, “Americas Challenge: Revitalizing our National Community,” Address to the National Press Club, February 9, 1995, p. 2;

⁴ This is at least the opinion expressed by Cohen, J. and Arato, A. in *Civil Society And Political Theory*, MIT Press, 1992;

Americans' political participation as compared with the apathy in other parts of the world. Americanism seemed to have found a very strong value to be associated with not only at home, but also overseas. This gained academic expression in comparative studies that reevaluated Tocqueville's description of the American society and put it in a clearer light by comparing statistical indicators of American associational values with others from around the world. Gabriel Almond and Sidney Verba's study entitled *Civic Culture* was to be just one of those appreciative works.

But alarm signals blown by some prodigious scholars, including Robert Putnam with the national bestseller *Bowling Alone* (Putnam, 2001), made scholars become aware of a decline in civic engagement on behalf of the American people in time, together with a decline in communal sentiments and a sense of social and moral obligations. In connection to this perceived phenomenon it was suggested that there has occurred, at the same time, a rise of a socially de-stabilizing individualism. As a reaction to this phenomenon, various scholars produced an abundant literature demonstrating the rationality of the American political establishment. The fact that those works are rich in quotations from Plato, Aristotle, Machiavelli, Hobbes, Locke, Burke, and Hegel is not accidental at all. They do what political thinkers have always been doing: defending the rationality of the *political* itself, as construed by those scholars and exclusively in relation to the state seen as supreme guarantor of the continuity of the political life. Martin Diamond interprets the American Constitution, for instance, as an expression of what the Founders actually sought to establish, that is, the world's first modern, commercial republic. Within it, the marketplace was to give rise to a variety of economic interests and professional profiles that would have made impossible destructive factionalism or a possible oppressive attitude of the majority over minorities. The American federal state is, in this respect, a guarantor of American society's being. The "multiplicity of interests" from Federalist No. 10 was to be posed against any coagulation of interests in various oppressive structures.⁵ Even the market was conceived of, therefore, as an aspect of the state and an essential element of the civil society as a guarantor of its balanced performance and position *within* the state. In any way, the civil society has become a

⁵ See the interpretation of the Federalist in Diamond, Martin, *As Far as Republican Principles Will Admit*, ed. William A. Schambra, American Enterprise Institute, Washington, D.C., 1992.

central point of focus for theorist from both the radical or conservative camps. They stress the importance of the civil society and moral values it presupposes in their writings. Walter Block, for instance, prescribes a greater reliance on mediating institutions, all active within the civil society, as a means of inculcating moral and spiritual values. (Block, 1994: 124). In line with these approaches is also J. A. Dorn's belief that civil society must revive by means of a higher sense of moral virtue (Dorn, 1996), while the libertarian thinker E. J. Dione posed not very long time ago perhaps the two crucial questions: 'Why Civil Society? Why Now?' (Dione, 1998: 1). His answers to these questions basically underscore the main idea expressed here, that civil society is central for understanding the political culture of a people in a democratic state.

Such questions make us think inevitably, as I have suggested in the beginning of this section, of the political status of the United States in the world at this very moment. Their position as the sole superpower in a, consequently, unipolar international system brought into attention a problem of confidence accentuated even to the extreme by the developments after September 11, 2001. The hurriedly announced end of history with the victory of liberal democracy over all forms of political and economic authoritarianism, as suggested by Francis Fukuyama (Fukuyama, 1992) in Hegelian keynote, is far from reality, and September 11 came just at the right time for theorists of alternatives to the Hegelian view. One of those scholars turned classical by virtue of events is Samuel P. Huntington who, in his famous *Clash Of Civilizations*, asserted that, "the years after the Cold War witnessed the beginnings of dramatic changes in peoples' identities and the symbols of those identities. Global politics began to be reconfigured along cultural lines." (Huntington, 1998: 19). Consequently, "the central theme of this book [*Clash Of Civilizations*] is that culture and cultural identities, which at the broadest level are civilization identities, are shaping the patterns of cohesion, disintegration and conflict in the post-Cold War world." (Huntington, 1998: 20). The world, and America especially, had to face the dark side of such hypotheses on September 11, 2001. Along with these cultural borders of conflict however, America confronts itself with many other major internal challenges. The economic and political problems inside capitalism itself were revealed in the period after the Cold War and changed, implicitly, political agendas across the ocean. In an important American journal, for instance, it was suggested that

capitalism, after the defeat of socialism, finds problems within itself, problems it could not or did not want to face during the Cold War, and that are related to values and human relationships. (Starobin, 1997: 106).

Moreover, the end of the Cold War left most of the American political camps without the ideological basis that constituted their *raison d'être* before the fall of the communist empire. Both conservatives and libertarians found in the totalitarian opponent at that time the ideal source of identity – it was the communist foe that they could identify themselves against. Within this context, it is not surprising that the idea of civil society has become more and more a favorite theme of discourse among politicians and scholars of what is now understood as the *political*. They attempted naturally at finding inside the society the sources of legitimacy for their policies, sources that could not be found outside anymore. Morality and the entire set of values attached to the concept of civil society became, therefore, central in political speeches and cases such as the Clinton sexual scandals made the head lines of political journals not only as mere events but also as sources of a new wave of relativism in the contemporary American society. It was pointed out that what raised concern was not only Clinton's supposed im morality, but also the easiness with which the society took interest in the subject as exposed by a media that seemed to have forgotten the moral censure it was supposed to apply to itself. (Bennett, 1998). The revival of the civil society as subject of political discourse is seen, therefore, as intimately related to the resurrection of a tradition of moral language that avoids the relativism of pluralized values. A key role is attributed within this context to individual reason and a shared morality is built on this foundation within the bonds of the civil society. Moreover, according to Harry Eckstein's culturalist theory of political change, actors do not respond directly to situations, but through "mediating orientation". (Eckstein, 1988). The civil society is exactly that physical and cultural space within which the actions and reactions of the individuals take place *socially* and are *mediated*, affecting each other and developing in this way patterns of social behavior that they are not even aware of. The political culture is to be looked for within this space, according to all the political scientists. However, what I propose with this paper is the evaluation of the political culture of a people from a broader perspective, as it will be seen in the following chapters. In my opinion an effort to redefine the very concept of the political is

made worth trying by this present understanding of the political culture which presupposes on many occasions, as the reader will hopefully see here, major misunderstandings. Comparing the statistical evidence concerning the American political culture with those scarce research results from a Balkan country might make no sense for scholars used to strictly scientific approaches but, as I shall try to demonstrate, such attempts reveal the necessity for a deeper rethinking of the concepts we employ in our research work. We do now enter the universe of the classical research on civic and political culture in order to be able to grasp where, when, and how the misunderstanding becomes possible.

The big *Unknown* remains the state. Hegel suggested, in his *Philosophy of Right*, that people should be *taught* as to realize that their freedom is possible only within the state. Anarchism develops a view contrary to the Hegelian one, while some surviving remainders on the side of Marxism suggest an understanding of man's *politicalness* in terms of duty⁶ as opposed to right. The idea is that civil society is the central theme in most of political thought masterpieces nowadays and the attitudes of the people within it and toward the state are subject of intense research since policies are built upon this fundament. However, few scholars dare approach the rationality of the state in itself. I have pointed out in the beginning of this section that the concept of civil society received a significant impetus from the need for it in the transition of the former communist regimes of Eastern and Southeastern Europe to democracy. We are, therefore, at an interesting political and historical crossroads in which in both America and its former enemies the concept is engaged into the political discourse. In spite of being approached, as we shall see, with different tonalities and short-term ends, the overall scope of this resurrection of the civil society is related to the need for the revitalization of political activity in those countries. The lethargy of the communist era and of the post- Cold War period had to be brought face to face with an effervescent principle. America, therefore, 'exported' this very concept to the East. The former communist Balkan countries (Romania included) were just some of the 'importers' in the aftermath of the Cold War. The concept, therefore, was imported as such, without any major local interpretations: the

⁶ See, for instance, the insistence of David Selbourne in indicating the principle of duty as essential for the redemption of human society, in Selbourne, David, *The Principle Of Duty*, Abacus, London, 1997;

civil society is the space of interactions between people, and between people (as organized as possible) and the state seen more or less as a bad guy but existent there as a given, historical reality.

The study of a culture in its political aspects cannot take place, indeed, but within a physical space where that culture reveals itself, the very physical space where the members of the society to be studied are active politically. That space is the civil society and it was never ever so seriously approached as during the last half a century due to the reasons presented above. It is, therefore, within the civil society that the modern political science places the *political* as the abstractly conceptualized notion of politics. This is actually a great progress since five or six decades ago few would seriously and sincerely think politics in terms of civil society in a world dominated by the fear of atomic war and the clash of the two giants separated by the Iron Curtain. *The Blackwell Encyclopaedia Of Political Thought* defines civil society (Latin: *civilis societas*) as the *summa* of the various forms of social and economic organization including their codes and institutions that are *not* related to the ones of the state; it is stressed the fact that the term has come to refer mainly to the non-political aspects of the social order. Therefore, the civil society is understood as a space in which the political action appears *a posteriori* as a particular manifestation of human nature, and that manifestation is expressed as an attitude, a political attitude, toward the state and its subunits and its specific manifestations almost exclusively. It is in general accepted that human individual's tendency to form associations is inherent in his nature and, according to the definition of civil society presented here, they form political associations within the civil society and, most probably, with the aim of mediating between the civil society and the political body, that is, most probably again, the State. The nature of the relations between individuals that derive from this conception of the society has been subject of innumerable studies reaching various conclusions. I shall refer in this section only to two of the classical works approaching the American 'political culture': Gabriel Almond and Sidney Verba's *Civic Culture -- Political Attitudes And Democracy In Five Nations* (Almond & Verba, 1989), and Robert D. Putnam's *Bowling Alone -- The Collapse And Revival of American Community*. These titles suggest that their authors analyze the American society mainly from two perspectives. Almond and Verba were focused on the political attitudes of

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Americans toward the political decision-making process as compared with the same attitudes in the Great Britain, Germany, Mexico and Italy. Robert D. Putnam, while not leaving aside the political aspects, took under analysis the spirit of the American community not in comparative terms but as a whole and in itself. He managed to draw public attention on the signs of its collapse. *Civic Culture* is a comparative study; *Bowling Alone* is a deep analysis of the communitarian spirit in America in general. Both works, however, evoke the long celebrated Alexis de Tcqueville's *Democracy In America* in which the French writer, honored by many as probably the first true politic al analyst ever, points out that, "The political associations that exist in the United States are only a single feature in the midst of the immense assemblage of associations in that country. Americans of all ages, all conditions, and all dispositions cons tantly form associations." (Tocqueville, 1981: 403). This paragraph is only one of the many that show why Tocqueville is the starting point of virtually all studies of American political culture that I have come across to. Since the notions of civil societ y and political culture are newly introduced in Romanian terminology⁷, it would be impossible for me to approach the subject at this stage in a detailed comparative manner. However, I shall employ in this chapter enough statistical data on the Romanian's perception of the political as to illustrate some of my opinions. Needless probably say that the very scarcity of serious analyses of the Romanian civic/political culture is an important observation to be made here within the context of the comparative approach to the two cultures.

⁷ The first and only translation of *CivicCulture* was done by Dan Pavel, one of my distinguished professors, some years ago, at the University of Bucharest, in 1996;

1. 2. THE AMERICAN POLITICAL CULTURE

1. 2.1. Civic Culture – The Political Culture Of Democracy

John Winthrop, author of the famous work *A Model Of Christian Charity*, believed strongly in civic and religious values as crucial for the establishment of a social context within which the human individual's freedom could become possible. Moreover, he saw a clear connection between people's level of education and its capacity of self-government on one side, and the possibility of defending that freedom.⁸ Alexis de Tocqueville made the same assumption later and, slowly but consistently, scholars and politicians came to believe in the deep connection between people's education and democracy's "life expectation". In the twentieth century, the concept employed by most scholars as to describe the society as a whole in relation to the political became known as *civil society*. Implicitly, the culture characterizing people's attitudes within and toward various aspects of the civil society was naturally called *civic* or *political culture*. Sydney Verba and Gabriel Almond published *Civic Culture* in 1963, a book that is still considered the best work of comparative politics of its time and a classic of the kind. In it, the authors gave the very definition of political culture that is still widely accepted in the academic circles. It is based on the assumption that the development and preservation of a stable democracy depends on a certain set of political and civic attitudes, on a certain level of political culture of the citizens living in that democracy. There can be no democracy outside a democratic political culture. The *Civic Culture* shows that political culture refers to the way in which the political system as such is internalized in people's knowledge, feelings and evaluations. In other words, the political culture refers to political orientations, that is, to citizens' attitudes toward the political system as a whole and each of its constitutive parts, as well as toward the role of the citizen himself within the system. The civic culture of democracy is the political culture. The authors define

⁸ For a detailed analysis see Bellah, Robert N., et al. (eds.), *Habits of the Heart - Individualism And Commitment In American Life*, Harper & Row, New York, 1986, p. 22-31;

then this political culture by employing some of the key concepts in political science, a fact that allows them eventually to build a specific typology. The first concept is that of *political orientation* and refers to the internalized aspects of political objects and relations. There are three types of political orientation: cognitive, affective, and evaluative. The second concept is that of *system as general object* that consists of three broad categories of political objects. In the authors' words they are as follows: "(1) specific roles or structures, such as legislative bodies, executives, or bureaucracies; (2) incumbents of roles, such as particular monarchs, legislators, and administrators, and (3) particular public policies, decisions, or enforcements of decisions." (Almond & Verba, 1989: 14). The people's demands in political terms and the policies responding them are grouped in two categories: input and output. The table below visualizes the mechanism of research so structured as it was actually at work in the analysis of the interviews done by the authors in the five countries mentioned above.

Table 1: Dimensions of political orientation.

	<i>System as general object</i>	<i>Input objects</i>	<i>Output objects</i>	<i>Self as object</i>
Cognition				
Affect				
Evaluation				

Source: Almond & Verba, 1989: 15.

By interviewing approximately 5000 people (approximately one thousand in each of the five countries), Almond and Verba were eventually able to analyze the answers received to their questions and conclude that the political culture of the people in the five countries, in spite of being far from homogenous, could be characterized as belonging to three main types, according to the simple matrix below in which 1 and 0 denominate aspects that the individual citizens interviewed were aware (1) or not (0) of.

Table 2: Types of political culture

	<i>System as general object</i>	<i>Input objects</i>	<i>Output objects</i>	<i>Self as object</i>
Parochial	0	0	0	0
Subject	1	0	1	0
Participant	1	1	1	1

Source: Almond & Verba, 1989: 16.

From the table above one can easily grasp how Almond and Verba analyze and categorize political cultures. As mentioned above, civic culture is the political culture of democracy as mere *awareness* of the political, while the electoral phase is just a particular episode of individual participation in the democratic process. Civic culture, in authors' words, is a culture that "combines modernity with tradition" (Almond & Verba, 1989: 5.), a culture pluralistic in nature and "based on communication and persuasion, a culture of consensus and diversity, a culture that permitted change but moderated it." (Almond & Verba, 1989: 6). It appears, according to Almond and Verba, in the three main types indicated above that are almost always mixed within the space of a country or a community. The predominance of one of them within that particular space gives the character of that culture. The *parochial* culture, for instance, characterizes the communities in which individuals are to a great extent not aware of the entire political system as a general object of their orientations (cognitive, affective, and evaluative), nor are they aware of the input they place themselves in the system (e.g. petitions), or the output they are supposed to get from the system (e.g. answers to their petitions). Moreover, they are not aware of their selves as objects of their own orientations within the political system. The *parochials* are simply not aware of their being present within a political system and are, therefore, bound to remain troglodyte subjects of whatever regime is installed at the top of that system (e.g. African tribal societies). Things change in the case of the *subject* political culture in the sense that the *subjects* are aware of the system as an object of their political orientations only inasmuch as they get an output from it but are not aware either of the fact that they are the ones to place inputs in the political system, or of themselves as politically relevant within the system. In order to make the readers understand the concept, the authors suggest that, "The subject

orientation in political systems that have developed democratic institutions is likely to be affective and normative rather than cognitive. Thus, a French royalist is aware of democratic institutions; he simply does not accord legitimacy to them.” (Almond & Verba, 1989: 18). Moreover, I would suggest that despite of not being included in the study developed by Almond and Verba, the political culture of the individuals in the former communist states falls in principle into this category. No research has been done there during that time as to reflect such a conclusion, so my opinion here must be taken strictly as a personal one. However, as one having experienced the communist dictatorship of Nicolae Ceaușescu in Romania, I can afford to say that that political culture would fit in neither the parochial, nor the participant types of political culture, but only in the subject one or a mixture of it with the others, as indicated below. The last one is the *participant* political culture and its exponents are aware of their orientations to all the four categories of objects. The most important aspect here is that they are aware of their own inputs and of themselves as objects of orientations within the political as such and this is what differentiates these people from the others mostly. Their participative attitude within the political system makes them active politically and hard to subject to arbitrary decisions in general. The respective decisions, when taken by the political body, must be legitimate, rational; they must convince the individuals with such participative reflexes of their own rationality.

Thus the study undertaken by Almond and Verba was placed under very clear methodological criteria and evaluative instruments. It presupposed evaluation of an enormous number of survey results, all of them gathered in the 1950s and 1960s. The results of the research done in the United States, Great Britain, Germany, Italy, and Mexico showed that the Americans and British are the most participative politically, that the Germans manifest detachment toward the political and subject competence, while the Italians and Mexicans manifested increased alienation toward the political and, only in the case of the Mexicans, some kind of aspiration toward the improvement of their own political culture, this situation placing them in the area of the subject political culture with parochial and sometimes participant shades.⁹ Alienation from the political system is

⁹ For a detailed analysis see the Chapter XII of *Civic Culture*, entitled “Profiles of Nations and Groups”, p. 307-336;

not a new or limited phenomenon. Governments all over the world face this problem in their relation with the people they govern and political scientists developed a wide array of instruments of research and ‘treatment’ of this syndrome. All of them, however, underscore the fact that the performance of the government in question is the main cause for alienation. Of course, different people react in different ways to the same problems. This is actually one of the important factors that contribute to the particular shaping of a specific political culture in one community and country or another. As it can be seen in the table below, the alienation people feel from the political systems they live within can be illustrated as a twofold phenomenon if the research focuses on two channels facilitating the occurrence of participation/alienation.

Table 3: Summary of political cognition; by nation

Nation	<i>Percentage of alienated or parochial in government output</i>	<i>Percentage of alienated or parochial in government input</i>	<i>Percentage of alienated or parochial in both government output and input</i>
United States	12	20	7
United Kingdom	26	33	14
Germany	26	28	13
Italy	42	63	38
Mexico	71	45	35

Source: Almond & Verba, 1989: 62.

The table above shows clearly that alienation is widely spread in Italy and Mexico. In other words, according to the research done by Almond and Verba, Italian and Mexicans perceive themselves as far from the government process both in its input and output aspects. At the same time, the Germans, British, and Americans manifest much less the feeling of alienation or, in authors’ words, “they are cognitively oriented toward the political system in its output and input aspects.” (Almond & Verba, 1989: 61). The results in Table 3 cannot be explained but by other aspects of cognitive orientation researched upon by the two political scientists in question. Table 4 and 5 give an idea about what lays behind this superiority of the Anglo-Saxons over the Italians and Mexicans in matters of political cognition. Table 4 is centered on the manifestations of their own nation that they are proud of.

Table 4: Aspects of nation in which respondents report pride; by nation¹⁰

<i>Percentage who say they are proud of</i>	<i>U.S.</i>	<i>U.K.</i>	<i>Germany</i>	<i>Italy</i>	<i>Mexico</i>
Governmental, political institutions	85	46	7	3	30
Social legislation	13	18	6	1	2
Position in international affairs	5	11	5	2	3
Economic system	23	10	33	3	24
Characteristics of people	7	18	36	11	15
Spiritual virtues and religion	3	1	3	6	8
Contributions to the arts	1	6	11	16	9
Contributions to science	3	7	12	3	1
Physical attributes of country	5	10	17	25	22
Nothing or don't know	4	10	15	27	16
Other	9	11	3	21	14

Source: Almond & Verba, 1989: 64.

The table above is suggestive of the fact that, of the five nations in the study, the Americans are the 'proudest' of their political institutions in the 1950s and 1960s. These figures should not be passed over superficially. The significant option of the Americans for the "Governmental and political institutions" here is also highly illustrative of the aspect of their culture that they perceive as defining them mostly, too, and one could draw from this conclusions that would be hard to contradict. It is particularly interesting to see that between the tandem "economic system"/"social legislation" and "governmental, political institutions" there is a huge difference of 62 and 72 percent respectively in options. This shows that the Americans found the working of those institutions good enough to vest so much pride in them and this comes in a significant contrast with the very little importance attributed by the same respondents to religion (only %3) or national contributions to arts and science (% 1 and %3, respectively). Table 5 refines the issue by pointing toward a section of the output people receive from the government. It shows the expectation people in the five countries have regarding the way two important institutional outlets of the government would treat them when coming in contact with them.

¹⁰ Authors explain in a note to the respective table that, "percentages exceed one hundred because of multiple responses." (p. 64);

Table 5: Expectation of treatment by governmental bureaucracy and police; by nation

Percentage who say	U.S.		U.K.		Germany		Italy		Mexico	
	bureauc.	police	bureauc.	police	bureauc.	police	bureauc.	police	bureauc.	police
They expect equal treatment	83	85	83	89	65	72	53	56	42	32
They don't expect equal treatment	9	8	7	6	9	5	13	10	50	57
Depends	4	5	6	4	19	15	17	15	5	5
Other	-	-	-	-	-	-	6	6	-	-
Don't know	4	2	2	0	7	8	11	13	3	5

Source: Almond & Verba, 1989: 70.

It is obvious that the Americans, as the ones who manifest the greatest pride in their governmental and political institutions, expect to be given equal treatment from the same institutions through their output. The authors conclude that, "In theoretical terms we can say that the British and Americans are high in output and input cognition, high in system affect, and high in output affect." (Almond & Verba, 1989: 69). The table above could be thought of in terms of trust, too. One does not manifest pride in and expect equal treatment from an institution unless one literally *trusts* that institution. As we shall see in the discussion of Robert D. Putnam's study, trust is an essential category of what is called social capital and Americans can be said, according to the above observations, to benefit from a high level of trust and, implicitly, a highly developed social capital. However, this issue will be broached a little later.

Almond and Verba do not leave their research at this level. They pushed the limits of the analysis toward even more profound spaces of understanding and in doing so they explored the behavioral and psychological springs of people's political attitudes. Consequently, they tried to prove that there is a link between the status of individuals in their own families and their status and attitudes within the political system itself, since "within the family and the school the child is first exposed to authority relationships". This approach will prove to be moreover relevant when compared with a study on the acquisition of political vocabulary among the Romanian children included in the section

dedicated to the analysis of the Romanian political culture. Americans' answers to a few questions lead to the results displayed in Table 5.

Table 6: Remembered influence in family decisions; by nation

<i>Percentage who remember they had</i>	<i>U.S.</i>	<i>U.K.</i>	<i>Germany</i>	<i>Italy</i>	<i>Mexico</i>
Some influence	73	69	54	48	57
No influence	22	26	37	37	40
Don't know, don't remember, and other	5	5	9	15	3

Source: Almond & Verba, 1989: 275.

Americans remember complaining in the family and being taking into account more frequently than the others. Consequently, they feel they are worth receiving an answer to their inputs in all the micro- or macro systems they become part of subsequently. Moreover, they are 'aware' of those inputs. The answers given by the respondents to a similar set of questions about participation in school discussions and debates show almost similar results. Forty percent of the Americans 'could and did participate' in school discussions and debates, while 15% 'could but did not participate.' (Almond & Verba, 1989: 276). Considering that the authors of *Civic Culture* view 'experience with nongovernmental patterns of authority' at least hypothetically relevant for understanding later political attitudes of the subjects interviewed, we can draw the conclusion that the high political participation on behalf of the Americans is at least partly the result of an educational process that, if it does not stimulate, at least leaves freer than in other cultures the very development of civic attitudes. No wonder than that Americans, along with the British and, in many respects, the Germans, are characterized by a highly cemented community bond. The study of Robert D. Putnam, as we shall see, demonstrates a dramatic degradation of that community bond in historical perspective but here we are at a stage in the development of the American society when its civic cement is still strong, especially when compared with other nations. This is expressed with the results to another set of questions concerning merely trust in people.

Table 7: Social trust and distrust; by nation

<i>Percentage who agree that</i>	<i>U.S.</i>	<i>U.K.</i>	<i>Germany</i>	<i>Italy</i>	<i>Mexico</i>
STATEMENTS OF DISTRUST					
“No one is going to care much what happens to you, when you get right down to it”	38	45	72	61	78
“If you don’t watch yourself, people will take advantage of you”	68	75	81	73	94
STATEMENTS OF TRUST					
“Most people can be trusted”	55	49	19	7	30
“Most people are more inclined to help others than to think of themselves first”	31	28	15	5	15
“Human nature is fundamentally cooperative”	80	84	58	55	82

Source: Almond & Verba, 1989: 213.

The figures above indicate that the Americans registered the best overall score regarding the statements of trust and the lowest over statements of distrust. In other words, this table is illustrative of the high confidence they have about human beings’ trustworthiness in general; Americans simply rely on other people more when compared with the British, Germans, Italians, and Mexicans in the study undertaken by Almond and Verba. The authors themselves explain the relevance of such measurements for the study of civic culture in question. Their belief is that, “the frequency with which people interact with one another and the kinds of character qualities they admire are in turn related to the qualities they impute to their social environment.” (Almond & Verba, 1989: 212). In other words, people are expected to interact more with people they trust more. Since the very level of trustfulness is high on behalf of Americans, their availability for community formation and activities becomes almost axiomatic.

The superiority of the Anglo-Saxon people in terms of political participation over the other nations has always been a matter of pride among themselves and that was not accidentally so. Their political achievements can be explained, indeed, only in these terms and they lead in the long run to an obviously superior political and economic situation in their countries as compared with others. However, the study has its shortcomings. Cristian R. Pirvulescu, lecturer at the Romanian National School of Political Science, views rightfully the analysis of civic culture in five countries done by

Gabriel Almond and Sidney Verba as an approach that neglects the essence of the concept of culture itself.¹¹ They judged the political performances in Germany, Italy, and Mexico from the perspective of the political values affirmed within the American liberal democracy. Pirvulescu deems the comparative approach itself as an error as long as it does not take into account the particularities of various national cultures subjected to comparative analysis. The best example given by the Romanian author in his article is the usage of concepts of 'right' and 'left' in analyses without the previous identification of the particular meanings of these words in the countries under research. By using special techniques but ignoring culture, history, and the political life in the observed countries, these analyses reveal nothing but composite orders that have actually little in common with the realities in at least two of the countries studied, Italy and Mexico respectively. In making this assertion, Pirvulescu follows closely the line of Daniel-Louis Seiler¹² in analyzing the comparative approach in *Civic Culture*. Moreover, the conclusions reached by the authors were not to be fully shared by other researchers in the field. Among them, the one I have chosen for analysis here is Robert D. Putnam, who posed anew the question of Americans' civic engagement and pointed out, in an alarming tone, that what seemed to be a solid participative culture, was actually a collapsing community.

1. 2. 2. Americans Bowling Alone

It is widely agreed upon nowadays that civic individualism with its strong biblical-communitarian connotations lay at the basis of today's American society and this in spite of the later emergence of the utilitarian individualism.¹³ Robert D. Putnam saw Americans bowling alone in America. That is, he saw the American community in decline judging from the perspective of the Americans' participation in community activities that dropped from a high level of participation in the generation following World War II to incredibly low levels in the next generations. Putnam has been often

¹¹ For a deeper understanding of this controversial viewpoint, see Parvulescu, Cristian R., "Cultura politica: un concept controversat" (in English, "Political Culture: A Controversial Concept"), in *Polis*, vol. 3, No. 3-4/1996, p. 7;

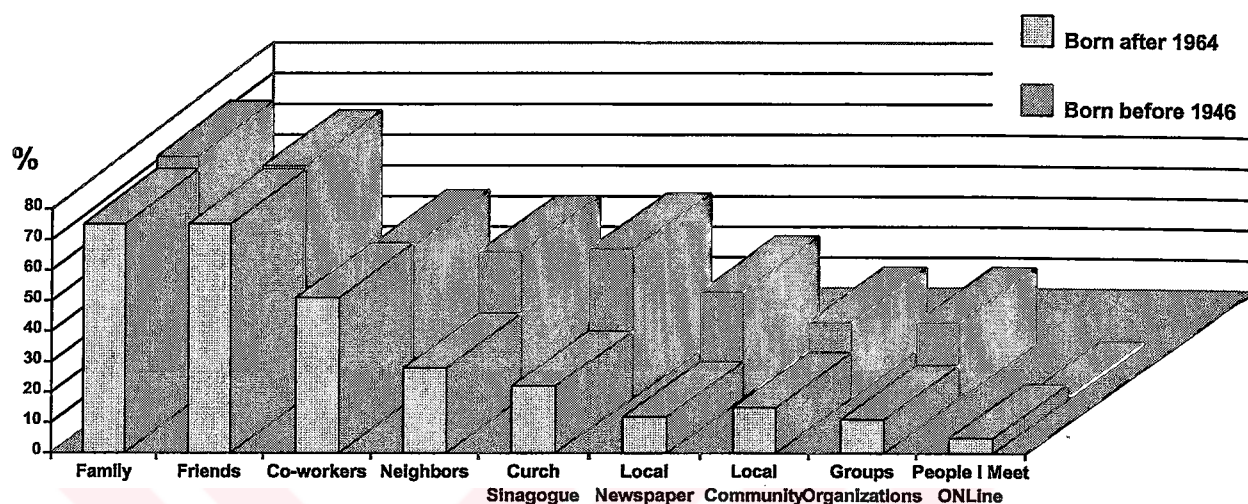
¹² The opinions of the twoshare common grounds and are situated within the context of similar academic projects. See, Daniel-Louis Seiler's *Politique comparée*, Armand Colin, Paris, 1982, p. 156;

¹³ For a detailed analysis see Bellah, *op.cit.*, p. 28;

described as one of the most influential academicians in the world today. He approached comparative politics, international relations, and American politics, and even political philosophy. Governance was his favorite topic of research and this led him naturally to the study of both the government institutions and the governed in their relations to those institutions. The results of his work can be summarized in his metaphor for the decline of social capital in America, that Americans are now “bowling alone”. As underlined in the paragraphs above dedicated to *Civic Culture*, people’s willingness to engage in social interaction with one another is viewed as essential for the public and, implicitly, political life in America. *It defines the political America*. The immediate impact of a growing disconnection from family, friends, neighbors, work or hobby circles and any other social structures means that in America there are manifest the premises of a decreasing in the quality of social and political life. The book offers an interesting and well-articulated interpretation of what happens and why this is happening in American society and government. Putnam argues there has been a decline in “social capital” in the USA. His contribution to the very understanding of the concept is significant and his interpretation of the downward trend of social capital in the United States and of the causes and implications of its decline has become both subject of scholarly critique and appraisal. He charts a drop in associational activity and a growing distance from neighbors, friends and family. He also examines some of the possibilities that exist for rebuilding social capital. This is because the political culture of a community depends essentially on the level and mode in which individuals are connected to each other and get to know each other as members of the same community. In another analysis of the American society, Bellah identified at least two aspects of civic involvement. The first referred to the attention and active preoccupation for the improvement of the community life in general. The second was about the same efforts dedicated particularly to the fulfillment of individual interests. (Bellah, 1996: 191). These are basically the tendencies that drive humans in their relation with the whole, that is, the community they are part of. Putnam approached the study of the American communitarian spirit along these coordinates and his work was to reveal interesting conclusions regarding the causes leading to Americans “bowling alone”. Social capital is a crucial concept for the understanding of Putnam’s demonstration.

The central thesis of the theory of social capital is that social networks are relevant in all fields of human affairs. Social capital refers to the collective value of all “social networks” as inter-human relationships and people’s inclinations to do things for each other as “norms of reciprocity”. The term social capital emphasizes a wide variety of quite specific benefits that flow from the trust, reciprocity, information, and cooperation associated with social networks. Social capital *creates value* for the people who are connected and - at least sometimes - for outsiders or bystanders as well. In the words of Putnam, “Social capital can thus be simultaneously a ‘private good’ and a ‘public good’. Some of the benefit from an investment in social capital goes to bystanders, while some of the benefit redounds to the immediate interest of the person making the investment.” (Putnam, 2001: 20). When within a group the individuals forming that group watch over, for instance, the safety of the house of one of them who is gone on a holiday, that is a benefit springing from the social capital as developed within that specific group. Social capital can be found in friendship networks, neighborhoods, mosques, synagogues and churches, in schools, entertainment or professional clubs, civic associations, or merely in pubs and cafés. It develops wherever people come in contact one with another and manifest interest in social interaction. Putnam warns that in America the stock of social capital has plummeted, impoverishing the life of both individuals and communities. He draws on evidence including nearly 500,000 interviews over the last quarter century to show, in 2001, that people sign fewer petitions, belong to fewer organizations, meet or simply know of neighbors less, meet with friends less frequently, and even socialize within and with their families to a much lower extent than in a not very remote past. *People are even bowling alone*, that is, they do on many occasions by themselves an activity that used to be, especially among those representatives of the generation following World War II, the very symbol of socialization in America. The chart below shows a detailed picture of the decline Putnam warns the Americans about. On the category axis are listed those forms of associations Putnam deems as representative for the socialization process in America. It should be noted from the very beginning that the years written in the legend indicate exactly periods of time before and after that era so much celebrated in *Civic Culture* and many other studies as a reference one for the American civic engagement.

Chart 1: The Meaning of Community for Successive Generations. The respondents answered the question, “*In What Ways Do You Get a Real Sense of Belonging?*”



Source: Putnam, 2001: 275.

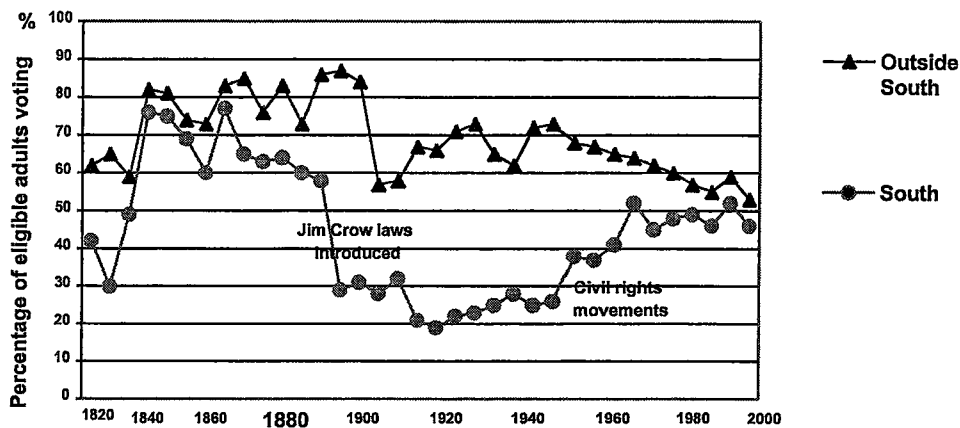
More Americans are bowling than ever before, but they are not bowling in leagues. Putnam shows how changes in work, family structure, age, suburban life, television, computers, women’s roles and other factors have contributed to this decline. Thus the central theme of the book is that, “for the first two-thirds of the twentieth century a powerful tide bore Americans into ever deeper engagement in the life of their communities, but a few decades ago – silently, without warning – that tide reversed and we were overtaken by a treacherous rip current. Without at first noticing, we have been pulled apart from one another and from our communities over the last third century.” (Putnam, 2001: 27). His research focused on what is called social change, that is, the change in people’s attitudes and, implicitly, actions, toward specific issues. Putnam characterizes social change repeatedly as unpredictable. So, what he is after in his research are only some clues to what is happening.

On the specific issue of political culture, Putnam notes that political participation is the best place for him to begin his research since it is the most widely discussed by the American people. I would insist here on the fact that it is essential for us, students and

scholars of American culture, to understand that political participation is first of all a manifestation of the political culture as a defining aspect of the American culture in general and as a whole. Putnam underscores, from the very beginning of Chapter 2, the fact that the American political participation is by far superior to the political participation in other democracies but, when compared to its own levels in the past, the decline becomes obvious. Of course, his explanation of the decline in question comes later as a result of thorough sociological research.

It is exactly at this point of the approach, at the explanatory stage, that I introduce, in the chapter dedicated to the 'political' *per se*, the fundamental question about this concept and point out that the misunderstanding of the *political* leads inevitably in the long run to this type of declines in people's participation in the political life. Robert Putnam found, as we shall see in what follows, his own answer to the question over this decline. My point is that he found the answer to one question over only an aspect of the decline, and not for the decline itself. By comparing the American aspects of this phenomenon to similar trends in the Romanian political culture as an *importer* of these concepts, I hope it will become clear that the redefining effort suggested above is imperatively necessary. Nevertheless, in order to have the reader understand what is that that I contest here, let us see what was it that Putnam found about the decline of the political participation in America. First, he points out that in spite of the removal, in the second half of the twentieth century, of the barriers represented by the very complex electoral registration requirements at that time, the decline of participation among the Americans in the electoral processes did not stop, with the highest rate in the Southern states as it can be seen in the chart below.

Chart 2: Trends in Presidential Voting (1828-1996), by Region



Source: Putnam, 2001: 32.

Indeed, the chart is highly illustrative of the importance of the civil rights movements for the evolution of civic activism in America. Since major battles were fought over the political rights of the African-Americans, the South line on the chart is more abrupt and suggestive of the convulsions happening in that region of the United States.

The cause for the decline in civic engagement, Putnam suggests, is located in the generational change in the 60s and 70s. In an article published in *The American Prospect* in 1996, Putnam indicated as the 'prime suspect' in this case the time consuming and subjectively view affecting television. (Putnam, 1996). Indeed, it has become common sense now that TV watching presupposes the consummation of a significant amount of time indoors, leaving little for outdoors activities in which civic engagement could appear. Moreover, the state propaganda took advantage of the invention and propagation of television as the main media instrument and students of the political in general should be aware of the fact that, as in the words of Noam Chomski, "The first World War was the first time that highly organized state propaganda institutions were developed." (Chomski, 2001: 23). Since then, the realities surrounding us have become more and more subject of state manipulation. Moreover, developments are not uniform. Here, the view of Aaron Wildawski could also be of a certain value. He points out that the political culture of a nation can and even must be represented as a competition between various 'ways of life' existing within the nation at a given moment. This means, implicitly, that there exist also various types of relations between the individual and the public sphere in

general, and the political sphere in particular.¹⁴ Francis Fukuyama, on the other hand, suggests that the communitarian spirit goes hand in hand with individualism as to define the American culture. What Putnam perceived as a decline in the former, meant at the same time an increasing manifestation of the latter. Fukuyama points, as Putnam does, at the political events in the second half of the previous century as crucial for understanding this phenomenon. In his book *Trust – The Social Virtues And The Creation Of Prosperity*, he asserts that, “The United States has undergone a ‘rights revolution’ in the second half of the twentieth century. This revolution has provided a moral and political basis for the promotion of individualistic behavior, with the consequent weakening of many earlier tendencies toward group life.” (Fukuyama, 1996: 283 -284). Theda Skocpol suggests that, “with several notable exceptions, such as the Christian Coalition, few local-state-national federations have been founded since 1960s and 1970s. And many of the thirty of forty nationwide voluntary federations that flourished in the mid-twentieth-century America have gone into absolute as well as relative membership decline.” (Skocpol, 1998: 42). Consequently, Skocpol considers the lack of links between the national and the local/state groups to be another explanation for the decline in American civic activism, with the derivative phenomenon here being the fact that educated Americans have chosen to move from broad voluntary associations to professional expert groups. This trend will also be noticed in the evolution of the Romanian people’s attitudes toward civic associations and civic action. However, this study will not venture yet in attributing universality to this declining trend.

Fukuyama may be wrong when suggesting that the weakening of America’s civic life was determined by the rise of individualism following the civil rights movements that “provided a moral and political basis for the promotion of individualistic behavior”. In my opinion, Putnam is closer to the truth when asserting that the achievement of those civil rights meant that the respective movement reached naturally its apex and, therefore, the decline came as a direct result of the achievement of the respective goals and not as a result of the individualism it inoculated in the American society. Fukuyama seems eventually to agree with Putnam over this idea. It is also my opinion that the lack of

¹⁴ For a detailed explanation see Wildawski, Aaron; Ellis, Richard; Thompson, Michael, *Cultural Theory*, Westview Press, Boulder, 1990, p. 215;

project and the vacuum in perspective is a major factor shaping political participation and this might be the best explanation for its downward trends in USA or elsewhere. However, I consider that perspective to be impoverished not by specific developments within the society, but by the very original project of the society – lead in its development by the state and its very rarely questioned definition of the political, human society failed to admit of the possibility of other definitions of its nature to be accepted as alternatives. Nevertheless, Putnam also agrees with Sidney Verba upon one important issue: the voting is essential for the political identification of the citizens, but it is not the only form of political manifestation of the individual and definitely not the main criteria for evaluating their political culture. However, as Putnam puts it, “political knowledge and interest in public affairs are critical preconditions for more active forms of involvement. If you don’t know the rules of the game and the players and don’t care about the outcome, you’re unlikely to try playing yourself” (Putnam, 2001: 35). The decline of the voter turnout and the general interest in public affairs as analyzed by Putnam seem to have been down by about 25% and 20% respectively. (Putnam, 2001: 37). The author sees this, as pointed out earlier, in strong connection with the generational change in America. Moreover, it is pointed out in the book that cooperative forms of political participation have declined more rapidly than expressive forms which means that Americans are obviously less willing to engage in collaborative activities and leave ‘participation’ in the political process at the level of petitioning or voting which can be done individually and require little or no interaction with other citizens. (Putnam, 2001: 45). Table 8 shows, indeed, that the expressive forms of participation have the lowest rate of decline.

Table 8: Trends in political and community participation

	<i>Relative change 1973-1974 to 1993- 1994</i>
Served as an officer of some club or organization	-42%
Worked for a political party	-42%
Served on a committee for some local organization	-39%
Attended a public meeting on town or	-35%

school affairs	
Attended a political rally or speech	-34%
<i>Participated in at least one of these activities</i>	-25%
Made a speech	-24%
Wrote congressman or senator	-23%
Signed a petition	-22%
Was a member of some "better government" group	-19%
Held or ran for political office	-16%
Wrote a letter to the paper	-14%
Wrote an article for a magazine or newspaper	-10%

From *Bowling Alone*, p. 45. Source: *Roper Social and Political Trends Surveys, 1973-1994*

Twenty five percent of Americans gave up over a period of twenty years to participating in at least one of the mainly participative activities indicated in the top half of the table. People from the generation following the World War I were more connected to the community in terms of participation because that was also their way of spending time. With little time left because of various reasons among which television, Putnam suggests, is an essential one, citizens tend to be simply satisfied with what is left; expressions of personal opinions on the political aspects of the society can be found more and more in opinion polls that 'go' to the subjects, than in community groups that 'gather' people. He gives at this point that diagnosis according to which, as underlined above, "In fact, the decline in social connectedness and social trust began after the greatest successes of the civil rights revolution of the 1960." (Putnam, 2001: 279 -280). What is suggested is not that this situation led to a devastating individualism, but simply that desiderata augment social coagulation and civic action, while their absence determine the dilution and decline of civic activism. Once the civil society sensed there was something to fight for, it gathered energies and pursued its aims. This aspect is crucial for the understanding of the very aim of this paper, together with another essential observation. I have been following over the last few years the evolution of people's opinions about the government in the United States and some of the surveys attracted my attention. They refer to the people's trust in institutions and the conclusions that could be drawn contradict to a great extent the image of the government in the book of Almond and Verba, while confirming the more realistic view of Putnam. We remember that the

political institutions were among the “aspects of nation in which respondents reported pride” in Table 4. Let us take a look at Table 9 below and see how people view institutions in America in 2001. A comparative perspective is also available, as regarding the trend of opinions from January 1998 onward.

Table 9. The Harris Poll. Latest: Jan. 11-15, 2001. N=1,011 adults nationwide. Margin of error: ± 3 . Question answered: “As far as people in charge of running [see below] are concerned, would you say you have a great deal of confidence, only some confidence, or hardly any confidence at all in them?”

	A Great Deal of Confidence (%)			
	1/01	1/00	1/99	1/98
The military	44	48	54	44
Major educational institutions (such as colleges and universities)	35	36	37	37
The U.S. Supreme Court	35	34	42	37
Medicine	32	44	39	38
Organized religion	25	26	27	25
Television news	24	20	23	26
Wall Street	23	30	30	18
The White House	21	21	22	20
Major companies	20	28	23	21
The executive branch of the federal government	20	18	17	17
Congress	18	15	12	12
Organized labor	15	15	15	13
The press	13	13	15	14
Law firms	10	12	10	11

Source: www.pollingreport.com

Another survey report is available here, showing the situation of people’s appreciation of honesty and ethical standards of people in the different fields. Table 10 below shows clearly that not only political institutions encounter a trust crisis, but also the people who work for them. It is even hilarious to see that politicians, namely senators and congressmen, share similarly low levels of trust in people’s view with lawyers or ‘journalists who publish only on internet’, while jewelers, professional journalists, carpenters or plumbers (‘home repair people’) are considered significantly more trustable.

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 BÜYÜKBAŞKANLIK BAKANLIĞI

Table 10. The Gallup Poll. Nov. 4-7, 1999. N=1,013 adults nationwide. Question answered: "Please tell me how you would rate the honesty and ethical standards of people in these different fields: very high, high, average, low, or very low? . . ."

		Very High/High (%)
1	Nurses	73
2	Druggists, pharmacists	69
3	Veterinarians	63
4	Medical doctors	58
5	Grade and high school teachers	57
6	Clergy	56
7	Judges	53
8	Policemen	52
9	College teachers	52
10	Engineers	50
11	Day care provider	41
12	Funeral directors	35
13	Computer industry executives	35
14	Bankers	30
15	Home repair people	29
16	State governors	24
17	Journalists	24
18	Auto mechanics	24
19	Business executives	23
20	Store salespeople	22
21	Nursing home operators	22
22	Computer salesmen	20
23	TV reporters/commentators	20
24	Local officeholders	20
25	Jewelers	20
26	Newspaper reporters	19
27	Building contractors	18
28	Labor union leaders	17
29	Senators	17
30	Stockbrokers	16
31	State officeholders	16
32	Entertainment industry executives	15
33	Real estate developers	15
34	Real estate agents	14
35	Lawyers	13
36	Gun salesmen	12
37	Congressmen	11
38	Journalists who publish only on the Internet	10
39	Insurance salesmen	10
40	Advertising practitioners	9
41	Telemarketers	9
42	Car salesmen	8

Source: www.pollingreport.com

Table 11 is suggestive of possible causes for such a situation. In spite of the smell of leftism it emanates, the Gallup Poll survey below suggests that the very fears of the Founding Fathers were perfectly justified; factionalism and factional interests have indeed become 'big' and operational in the American society to the extent that they are deemed responsible in an amazing proportion of 70% for the running of the government in respondents' view, a little more than two centuries after the establishment of the United States.

Table 11. The Gallup Poll. Latest: July 6-9, 1998. N=1,001 adults nationwide. Margin of Error: ± 3 . Question answered: "Would you say the government is pretty much run by a few big interests looking out for themselves or that it is run for the benefit of all the people?"

	%
Run by a few big interests	70
Run for the benefit of all the people	25
No opinion	5

Source: www.pollingreport.com

The civil rights movement of the 1960s was, therefore, just one facet of the process of decline in Americans' civic and political engagement. As we shall see in the analysis of similar evolutions in Romania, time frames and fundamental differences between the general cultural features of the two societies in under analysis here become almost irrelevant when the decline of civic/political engagement is shown as a phenomenon more profound than it looks. *What is under analysis here is democracy and its culture no matter where it is embedded.* The political aims and the means employed for achieving them in the two societies differ to a great extent, indeed. However, after the achievement of the respective aims, the civic action found in both cases no basis for growth or perpetuation and the indicators of civic engagement show its significant decrease. Moreover, after the success of the civil rights movement, another 'victory' was to come with the collapse of the communist empire in 1989. Robert A. Nisbet suggested that, "unfortunately, it has been the fate of [civic] institutions and relationships to suffer

almost continuous attrition during the capitalist age.”¹⁵ With every victory, they lost more and more of their energy and with what Fukuyama hurriedly announced as the final victory of liberal democracy, the stock of motivation most probably evaporated in the gun powder smoke of 1989.

1. 3. POLITICAL ATTITUDES IN ROMANIA – A DIFFERENT POLITICAL CULTURE

The systematic study of the Romanian society is not at its beginning stage. It has been developed under the wide umbrella of the sociological research for more than a hundred years, starting with the illustrious generation of pioneering intellectuals in the second half of the nineteenth century. However, the study of what was defined here as *civil society* is in its very inceptive phase due to various important reasons. First, the authoritarianism of the previous communist regime left no room for the free development of civil society as such. Consequently, sociology was forgotten within some limited areas of research and could not develop branches of study according to the natural divisions and orientations of the permanently developing society itself. The space of the political was confiscated by the authoritarian state and the scientific approach to it, even if it were to be allowed by the authorities, would have led to valueless conclusions. Second, the isolation from the free world hindered the very incorporation of the concept of civil society itself in the intellectual life in Romania. I remember the term being mentioned on many occasions on the Voice of America or BBC radiobroadcasts but only after the fall of the communist regime could I understand the subtleties hidden behind the words *civil society*. Consequently, the very availability of the Romanian social environment for research was affected. Long after the revolutionary acts of '89, it was still difficult to interview people from the police, the military or the church. Villagers were also among those who were tempted to avoid answering questionnaires that seemed to them at least dubious since most of them could not understand their purpose and meaning. The normal

¹⁵ Robert A. Nisbet is definitely not a singular voice expressing this viewpoint. However, his belonging to the traditional American political thought school determined me to choose his opinion as an example here. See Nisbet, Robert A., *The Quest for Community*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1971, p. 238;

reaction among people was for a long time one of suspicion; they would have feared that responding to an interview destined to a scientific research might affect their careers or could create some sorts of problems within the professional or habitual environment. Under such conditions, a scientific approach would have been impossible and for all these reasons the manner of approaching the Romanian political culture here will differ from the manner adopted in the case of the American political culture.

Even after the installation of a democratic government, the development of a specialized branch was not easy. The University of Bucharest barely managed to establish a faculty of political science in 1994 while the thorough study of political sociology and, implicitly, of the civil society theories could become a reality only with the first generation ever to study the literature in the realm on the original texts in English, within the English section of that faculty, starting with the year 1997. I had the honor to be a graduate of that first generation and not the only one suddenly interested in the approach to civil society. Students must have understood quite rapidly the meaning and the value of civil society for a well-established democracy and their interest was to be rewarded with the discovery of a very rich scientific bibliography on the subject, most of it in English. The two studies analyzed in the previous section of this chapter were among those which raised students' interest the most. However, in spite of the many institutes specialized in the study of public opinion that appeared after 1989, the young Romanian scholars did not seem to have gained enough experience in a short time as to be able to undertake the task of analyzing the Romanian civil society with the thoroughness of the American scholars. One explanation could be simply the fact that most of them graduated only two years ago from the university. However, experienced sociologists could have taken the job, too. In my opinion, what keeps those people away from such approaches is not mainly their lack of experience, but the difficulty of undertaking it as based on the model offered by the American scholar literature. Americans simply believe in the tabular language while my colleagues at the university did not seem to take tables that much seriously. Scholars throughout the country manifested this reluctance to go deep into figures and tabular language with a very significant constancy; even the numbers of those suffering from the communist terror were left in their unclear situation after the fall of the communist regime. The general

feeling is that there is always a *something else* behind those figures that cannot be explained with charts and in percentages. However, some attempts have been done. One group of young sociologists, for instance, published in 1999 the results of their researches in a book whose title could be translated in English¹⁶ as *The Faces Of Change – Romanians And The Provocations Of Transition* (Berevoescu et al, 1999), a book in which significant dimensions of the civil society in Romania are quite competently covered. Moreover, the contributors to the main Romanian sociology review, *Sociologie Româneasca*, have started lately focusing on issues related to people's involvement in the political process and their awareness of themselves as part of the system. Many of the articles published in that review along with others will have an echo in this paper. Unfortunately, the conditions as described in this short introduction did not facilitate an explosion of vast studies in this realm. So, how shall we compare two political cultures that practically think of and portray themselves in such different terms? My main answer to this question is that the very difficulty encountered here is itself a good subject of analysis. I shall employ in my research some of the surveys conducted by various opinion poll research institutes in Romania, along with the observations made by some of the local political scientists over the issue. This will help us put together some of the required data as to be able to grasp if not the defining features of the Romanian political culture (*political culture* as defined by Almond and Verba), at least its tendencies and general outlook. The scholars of civic culture as the political culture of democracy should not be surprised to find in the introductory pages of virtually all scientific studies in this field the mentioning of Almond and Verba's work. The concept of associational capacity, so much appraised by Alexis de Tocqueville as a vital characteristic of the American people, was developed in that very America, following the efforts of scholars like the two mentioned above, into *civic culture*. Since few other alternative developments could be found and, anyway, never reaching the clarity of Almond and Verba's concept and research instruments, Romanian scholars and others adopted with no reservation these achievements. Consequently, their research methods will most probably be found by the readers as very similar to the ones of the famous American scholars.

¹⁶ All translations from bibliography in Romanian have been done by the author of this research paper unless otherwise indicated;

The most important aspect I would like to underline here is that, by passing to the Romanian case in this paper, we moved from what I like calling the *exporter* of the concept of civic culture as the political culture of democracy, to one of the numerous *importers* of the concept seen as an *instrument* in the establishment of democracy. In other words, civil society performs different functions in the US and Romania. In the former, civil society is practically the way society *is* in democracy. As we shall see in the following paragraphs, in the Balkans and elsewhere in the world where the authoritarian regimes collapsed at the end of 1980s, civil society is looked upon there as an essential *instrument* in the democracy-building process, in the transition to democracy. Dieter Dettke, for instance, noted that under the conditions of the upheavals in Central and Eastern Europe, the most important concept the West could offer to the newly born democracies was the concept of civil society. (Dettke, 1998: IX). In Romania, the process of transition to democracy was influenced, as elsewhere, by the way that process was initiated, that is, by the way the change of regime occurred. It is now widely known that the change in question took place in Romania by means of a revolutionary act originating in the popular protests against Ceaușescu in December 1989. The brutal response of the communist authorities resulted in around 1050 deaths among the protesters, a fact that led to an explosive situation throughout the country. For many years there was present among the citizens a feeling of distrust regarding the capacity of the government to perform its functions on one hand and, on the other, the very political orientations of that government, considering that the public opinion suspected very seriously that the post-communist regime still contained communist elements. The electorate itself was in a state of inertia from this viewpoint; when having to face the difficulties related to the transition to a market economy with the social dramas presupposed by that process, not a few were those who looked back to the calm waters of the communist times with regret and nostalgia.

But the socio-economic changes in Romania were impressive as compared with the situation before December 1989. One should not forget, for instance, that where the economy had been dominated totally by the state owned businesses which amounted up to almost 100% of GDP, now around 60% of the GDP comes from the private sector. This is a fact illustrative of the rapid reformation effort undertaken in the only 13 years

since 1990. Within this context, as the Romanian scholar Doina Balahur points out, one of the greatest gains after 1989 was the discovery of the Other. (Balahur, 1999). Mrs. Balahur underscores in another work of hers that totalitarianism was built and maintained through the cultivation of distrust and suspicion about the Other in inter-human relations. (Balahur, 1999: 28). What the fall of the communist regime brought in Romanians' lives was, therefore, the possibility of exercising their *politicalness*, their sociability, in all types of social activities ranging from cultural to economic or political. In what follows, I shall focus on a study made by a group of three scholars of political culture in Romania, a study which analyzes the aspects of people's political orientations at a critical moment for the Romanian democracy, in 2000, when the democratic transition from a social-democrat to a center-right government took place for the first time through elections in country's history. Ioan Mărginean and Iuliana Precupețu work for the Research Institute for Quality of Life, while Marius Precupețu is an academician at the National School of Political and Administrative Sciences in Bucharest. Their study, entitled "Romania In The Third Wave Of Democratization"¹⁷, is based on the theoretical developments of Gabriel Almond and on the empirical data gathered in 2000 in Central and Eastern Europe within the program entitled "Consolidation of Democracy in Central and Eastern Europe" under the auspices of Vidriana University from Frankfurt-by-Oder (Germany), benefiting from the coordination of Professor Detlef Pollack. It is, therefore, a study that deals, like *Civic Culture*, with the manifestations of the political culture at a given moment in time, and not with developments over a few years, decades, or centuries as in Robert Putnam's studies. It could not actually have been possible in any other way since the civil society in Romania could be analyzed, as already indicated, only after the fall of the communist regime; after the barriers to the academic study were eliminated and, at the same time, the civil society could literally think of itself as a free developing entity and not one suffocated by the communist yoke.

¹⁷ In Romanian in original, Mărginean, Precupețu, Precupețu, "România în cadrul celui de-al treilea val al democratizării", *Sociologie Românească*, 1-4, 2001, p. 20-34;

1.3.1. Romanian Sociological Studies On Political Culture

The study in question is based on the preliminary idea that, according to the conclusions of one of the authors' previous article, in Romania there is a wide social support for democracy and the democratic values over all the period following the uprising in 1989. (Marginean, 1997: 353-366). With this in mind, the authors suggest that the obvious disappointment of the Romanian citizens with the political situation in the country has to do not with the democratic nature of the institutions, but with the performance of the government officials who are responsible for the difficult times the country passes through right at this moment. A crucial element here is what the authors call "așteptările pe care oamenii le-au dezvoltat față de acesta [sistem]", that is, people's expectations regarding the system. (Marginean et al, 2001: 23). Indeed, when judged from this perspective, analysts can visualize better the attachment of the people to democracy, what they expect from the democratic regime, and what they actually get in the end from the policy makers. In the table below, the respondents were asked to opt for either socialism or democracy as values *per se*. A remark should be made here before anything else. Socialism, in most of the former members of the totalitarian eastern block, is not understood as it was and still is in the rest of the world. From the viewpoint of the communist leaders before 1989, socialism was an intermediate stage toward the final target of the regime, that is, toward communism. Therefore, what the peoples of those countries overthrew in 1989 was the 'socialist' regime and, consequently, socialism has a very bad reputation among the intellectual elites in the Eastern Europe in general. Things are different when the large majority of people come into question since they are the ones to see nowadays how significant the costs of transition from that type of socialism to democracy are. Their attitudes are displayed in the table below by the authors of the study we analyze here.

Table 12 (1)¹⁸. *Democracy as value/Socialism as value (%)*

	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know/No answer
Democracy is always good	36,4	38,9	13,6	4,5	6,6
Democracy as form of government is adequate	39,5	40,9	9,2	3,4	7,2
Socialism is always good	7,4	18,2	31,2	33,6	9,7
Socialism as form of government is adequate	6,8	15,8	22,6	42,5	12,3
I was satisfied with the way socialism worked	12,9	25,4	27,2	27,3	7,1

Table 9 shows that democracy as value is positively appreciated by 75,3% of the respondents while only 25,6% has the same impression about socialism. It is also true that a significant number of people were satisfied with the way socialism worked in Romania but this does not seem to affect the prestige of democracy *per se* among the respondents. Nevertheless, in authors' words, "the post-communist upheavals led to a rise in population's expectations and the effective functioning of the system disappointed the majority of the people." (Marginean et al, 2001: 24). As we could see in the case of the American people, these feelings, in spite of the apparent national specificity of their causes, are directed to the same target: the policy makers. This in turn implies the alienation of the people from the political institutions; from the system they live in itself. Democracy itself is inevitably compromised in this way and in the long run.

At this point, a short look into the past would be helpful. In a work already quoted here, Sebastian Lăzăroiu notes that all data gathered in 1997 indicated an obviously ascendant trend for that year and suggested people's high expectations at the time of the research. However, the trend turned into a descendant one during 1999 as influenced by the political developments in the country. This change, in some domains being even drastic, shows simply that high expectations lead to high collapses as well. (Berevoescu et al, 1999: 92). Democracy, despite of its shining aura, needs a system to put it in place, to implement and enforce its laws and, as long as the system is made by and of men and

¹⁸ In parentheses there are the numbers of the respective tables as they appear in the work under analysis;

women with more experience within a totalitarian regime than in a democratic one, high expectations are almost irrational. Political speeches, electoral propaganda and various other factors contribute, however, to the confectioning of that particular environment favorable to the unjustified and on many occasions irrational rise in people's expectations. What the results of the study made for year 2000 show is illustrative of the negative effect of such artificial increase.

The three authors of "Romania In The Third Wave Of Democratization" point out then that the ones people blame for all the mess are the politicians. Indeed, who else? The similarity with the Americans blaming their own politicians is more significant that it looks now but this significance will be approached in detail only in the next chapter. For now, let us just take a look at the table included in the study under analysis here and displaying interesting data regarding Romanian people's attitudes toward politicians. The table speaks for itself.

Table 13 (6): Attitudes toward politicians

	Strongly agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly disagree	DK/NA
	%	%	%	%	%	%
Politicians don't care what simple people think	63,9	20,2	9,9	2,1	1,1	2,7
Politicians keep their word	4,3	8,2	20,0	25,6	37,7	4,2
	Strongly agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly disagree	DK/NA
	%	%	%	%	%	%
Without professional politicians the country would be worse off	23,6	21,9	24,0	9,5	6,6	14,4
Most politicians are corrupted	58,3	24,1	8,8	2,3	0,8	5,7

The percentages indicate not only a tendency of alienation from the political class on behalf of the respondents, as indicated by the authors, but also something even more interesting. On the statement "without professional politicians the country would be worse off", no less than 45,5% of the respondents manifest positively, while 24,0 are undecided and 14,4% did not give or did not know of an answer. Only 16,1% did not agree with the assertion. This situation is extremely significant if one is aware of the fact that the democratic institutions *cannot function* without elected politicians; the

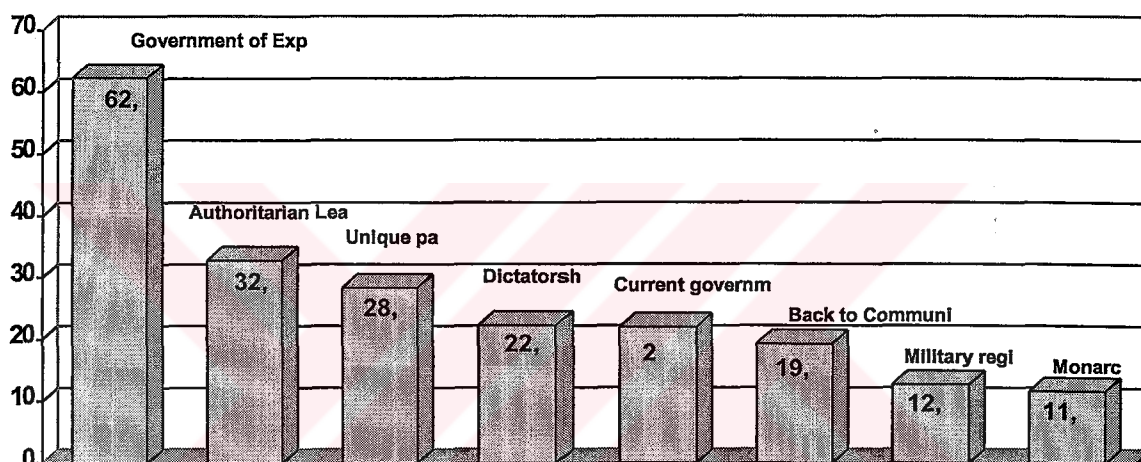
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respondents, therefore, seem to have been able to conceive of the system being without politicians, that is, lacking political leadership. This sounds like anarchy to me. I want to make it clear at this point that the syntagma “professional politicians” is the translation of what indicates in Romanian literally “people whose profession is that of politicians.” I fear to even think that the respondents in question could conceive of a leadershipless system; what these answers indicate means rather that people are simply disappointed with *those* leaders that they see leading the destinies of the country at the time of the respective interviews. The bluntness of both the statement in question and the percentages analyzed in detail above should nevertheless be kept in mind because I shall come back to them as important signs of what I consider to be a more profound phenomenon. One of the European scholars of democratic processes from the National Center of Scientific Research in Paris pointed out that, “the disenchantment and discontent is general. It is manifested in all advanced democracies. The lack of confidence is not only chronic and general, it is also structural in the sense that it concerns most of the important institutions [of democracy].” (Dogan, 2001: 1). The causes leading to this situation are looked for within the political systems as they are now, while my intimate belief is that scholars do not look where they should. This will be the central theme of the next chapter in which I shall try to prove mainly that the very misunderstanding of the definition of the *political* and the consequently wrong employing of the concept in practical ‘political’ life leads through the historical process to such manifestations of political alienation. Until then, let us follow for a little while the path opened by the study under analysis here.

Before we move to the next chart, I want to submit to reader’s attention now one of the famous statements of a famous American president. His opinion as expressed in this fragment of a speech is relevant here for various reasons. The president in question stated that, Presidential candidate Woodrow Wilson sounded the alarm: “What I fear . . . is a government of experts,” he noted in his 1912 Labor Day Address in Buffalo. “God forbid that in a democratic country we should resign the task and give the government over to experts. What are we if we are to be [scientifically] taken care of by a small number of gentlemen who are the only men who understand the job? Because if we don’t understand the job, then we are not a free people.” (Wilson, 1956: 83). The world has

changed considerably since the times Woodrow Wilson made these remarks and, in the complex economic and political environment of our present days, the ‘experts’ are more and more needed, as the chart below shows, especially in countries like Romania where the *knowledge* of the democratic governance is viewed as a science to be learned and not as a way of life.

Chart 3 (1). *The number of respondents (%) who agreed with one of the following alternatives*



Considering the way people seem to view facts in the Romanian political system, no wonder that the three authors wanted to find out how eventually the respondents conceived of the government; what type of a government did they think would be able to solve the problems. Chart 3 offers a possible answer to such questions. The authors of the study presented here point out that the government of Romania, at the moment this survey was done, was a government accused from all sides of the society for being a too much politicized one. ‘Populism’ was the most fashionable label analysts attached to its policies and that was not accidentally. After the fall of the communist regime, the space of legitimization remained empty for a long period of time and refilling it with new and solid sources of legitimization was not an easy task for the post-revolutionary governments. For more than four decades communists claimed they represented the popular power and even when the economy started showing signs of collapse, the official propaganda covered the mud of decline with the shining mantle of the communism as a

supreme goal that could not be achieved without collective sacrifice. The official ideology fit very well in this picture since the fundamental slogan was “government by all and for all”, an ideological *something* so difficult to grasp in practicality that even the Western thinkers could not find for a long time the ideal antidotes to counter- attack it. After 1989, this imaginary source of legitimization vanished as to leave room for a Western style democracy in which the interests of all were to be represented in a parliament that was soon to be seen as the area of immunity for a few increasingly corrupted politicians. Hence, this option of the respondents is as shown in Chart 3. They were obviously fed up with the quarrels on the halls of the Parliament building and considered that only a government of technocrats could do what the government was actually supposed to do, that is, to govern, to administer the country. The politicization of the governmental activity did not bring any good to the common citizens and was seen, therefore, as the main cause for the degradation of day-to-day life in the country. It is however significant to notice that going back to communism was again not a serious option for a large majority of the people.

I have pointed out above that one of the essential features of the modern political world is an almost generalized distrust in institutions. In the United States, the phenomenon has been one of long time erosion and lead slowly to the situation as illustrated especially by tables 9 and 10. In Romania, Ioan Marginean and the Precupețu couple analyze this specific issue in a similar manner as it can be seen in the table below.

Table 14 (5). Trust in political institutions

	<i>No trust</i>	<i>Little trust</i>	<i>Some trust</i>	<i>Much trust</i>	<i>Don't know/No answer</i>
	%	%	%	%	%
Political Parties	45.9	30.9	12.2	1.5	5.9
Politicians	50.8	28.4	12.1	0.7	8.1
Parliament	46.8	28.8	14.8	2.4	7.3
Government	43.0	28.3	16.2	4.8	7.7
Prime Minister	42.9	27.2	13.9	8.1	8.0
President	20.3	18.5	29.5	23.5	8.1

At this point, the authors stress the fact that the entire literature in the domain underscores the generalized crisis of trust in institutions but, in their understanding, this is suggestive

of a general aspiration on behalf of the people toward the consolidation of democracy through better democratic institutions, and not a decline in devotion to the fundamental values of democracy. They invoke here one of the interesting conclusions of Mattei Dogan who considers that the erosion of trust can be seen as a sign of political maturation. (Dogan, 1999: 344). In other words, the fact that people can express their disappointment about specific institutions could mean that they can evaluate those institutions; in Almond and Verba's keynote, they *are* aware of the system and of themselves being part of the system in a relation defined in terms of input and output. However, other surveys indicate precisely that the domain of the political is generally viewed as contaminated by 'diseases' responsible of all the bad in the society and I view this as a more serious problem than the optimistic views mentioned here let us see. The Romanian Institute of Marketing and Polls also publishes periodically statistics that can help scholars of political culture in their work. Below there is an illustration of people's trust in main institutions at work in the Romanian society as resulting from a survey focused on the political opinions and attitudes of the Romanian electorate in March 2001 and figures showing how the situation over the same issue was one year before. The minuses indicate, "little" or "no trust at all", while pluses indicate "much" or "very much trust" in the respective institutions.

Table 15. Trust in main institutions. How much do you trust the following institutions?

<i>Institutions</i>	<i>Dec 2000</i>		<i>Jan 2001</i>		<i>Feb 2001</i>		<i>March 2001</i>	
	-	+	-	+	-	+	-	+
Mass-Media	28%	71%	27%	70%	29%	69%	26%	72%
Church	7%	92%	8%	91%	8%	92%	9%	90%
Presidency	39%	59%	40%	59%	39%	60%	38%	61%
Parliament	57%	42%	55%	42%	56%	43%	54%	44%
Government	50%	48%	46%	50%	46%	52%	45%	53%
Local Government	36%	63%	39%	59%	38%	61%	39%	60%
Courts	57%	41%	57%	40%	56%	40%	56%	42%
Police	51%	48%	53%	45%	52%	46%	48%	50%
Military	14%	85	17%	82%	16%	82%	16%	83%
Trade Unions	52%	40%	53%	38%	55%	36%	55%	35%
Private companies	59%	35%	58%	34%	58%	35%	59%	32%

Source: Institute of Marketing and Pools (IMAS). Home page at www.domino.kappa.ro/imas/home.nsf

When compared, tables 14 and 15 bring forth interesting hypotheses. Firstly, I want to underscore the generally good position in which the presidency is placed in rankings. Traditionally a political environment favorable to authoritarian leadership, the Romanian society is portrayed in these studies as to confirm this characteristic through the answers given to the surveys presented above. The institution of presidency is the central point in the state system in Romania where, some say, through the adoption of the French model of strong presidential political system, the president enjoys multiple and stable channels for the exercise of power. No wonder then that, especially in the hard times of transition to democracy, people view the President of the Republic as the main pole of political and social stability. Significantly positive indicators can be noticed in relation to the church and the armed forces. Those institutions also benefit from the fact that they are not and cannot be associated with the political institutions unless they somehow become tolerant regarding the much-feared and sometimes suspected politicization of their domains. The mass media and the local government are also ranked well in people's preferences and trust in them has a specific significance. They are functionally situated right on the imaginary border between the political and the civil society, as a bridge connecting the two in a supposedly lucrative relation. This double-folded positive orientation toward these two institutions is very significant because the mass media represents the source of information, while the local government is that segment of the national administration in the closest contact with the governed in the modern state. People tend to trust these institutions and distrust the national government and the politicians from the high national political institutions, that is, the Parliament and the national government. Table 13 suggests the essential aspect of the public-politicians relation as resulted from the study we focus on here. Alienation from the political process becomes in the light of these studies not just a temporary social phenomenon, as almost *a way of life* in embryonic form. People seem to react consciously or not against the tendency of the political class to turn the social environment that it rules over into an amorphous mass of subjects characterized by what Almond and Verba called a *subject* political culture. Respondents refuse the status of subjects of the political and feel they must have a say in the process.

Table 16 (8). Political efficiency

	<i>Strongly agree</i>	<i>Agree</i>	<i>Undecided</i>	<i>Disagree</i>	<i>Strongly disagree</i>	<i>Don't know/No answer</i>
	%	%	%	%	%	%
"I think I have a good understanding of political issues"	20.9	33.3	22.7	8.5	3.9	10.7
"Common citizen influences considerably the political life"	10.9	11.9	19.9	23.3	24.6	9.5
"Even the best politician does not have much influence because of the way the government works"	34.1	24.2	17.5	7.9	3.0	12.2
"People like me have no say over government"	50.0	17.8	14.1	6.9	4.5	6.6

As it can be easily noticed, only around a quarter of the number of respondents consider they have a say over the political issues in the country. The others probably conceive of themselves as a 'mute majority' whose voice is simply not taken into account by the political class. Mattei Dogan points out, as underscored in this paper, that this decline in people's trust in the democratic institutions is a phenomenon present in all democracies in the world and that "the most trusted institution is the family, in spite of the fact that in Europe and the United States one out of every three marriages ends today in a divorce." (Dogan, 2001: 1). Institutions outside the traditionally close -to-the-individual family circle come under the more and more pertinent evaluations of the citizens in all democratic states. And table 16 shows the fact that even if politicians were to be 'good', respondents believe, they could not influence the government because of *the way it works*. This suggests distrust in the structural and impersonal aspects of the political system, an impression strengthened when comparing the more than 50% of respondents who consider they "have a good understanding of political issues" with the almost 70% who feel they "have no say over government." The conclusion which could be drawn from these figures is that the respondents are simply aware of what 'should be done' while the decision makers do not bother to ask for their political options in a universal democratic system in which people's opinions reach the governments only in the form of the suffrage one or two times over a period of four to five years, referenda very rarely and only over critical issues, and indirectly through the media. And, still, people all over the world believe in democracy.

The Central and Eastern Europe countries in general and the Balkan countries in particular are of special interest in the analysis of civic culture as the culture of democracy because they are those states that are in the process of transition toward a democratic system developed intensively in the West during the Cold War period when these, now, importers of the democratic culture experienced conditions totally adversary to such developments. It is, if anything else, the supreme test of the *product* exported, as I suggest, by the West and, mainly, by the American culture. The prospects, however, are not promising at all. Dogan points out that, for instance, “in Greece and Bulgaria more than 70 percent of citizens mistrust the public administration, the judicial institutions, parliament, and trade unions” (Dogan, 2001: 5), and the statistics he employs in his research show similar figures in the case of Romania, Croatia and Slovenia, the situation in the United States being only numerically but not in principle different. The alarm signal blown by Robert Putnam seems to apply to the entire democratic or pre-democratic world. A better understanding of this phenomenon could probably be achieved if one looks at studies of political socialization such as “Political Socialization And The Acquisition Of Political Vocabulary”, published by the Romanian sociologist Vasile Sebastian Dancu in *Sociologie Romaneasca*, in 1999. (Dancu, 1999: 51-67).

Dancu accepts the fact that the essential paradigm of socialization is the *interactionalist* one which places importance on the axiological or cognitive resources individuals make use of in the process of socialization but, at the same time, he stresses the centrality of individual's mere resistance to external norms in this process. In what concerns strictly the political socialization, the Romanian scholar draws attention to the fact that it was heavily influenced by Durkheim's definition of education as the methodical socialization of the young generation. (Dancu, 1999: 52). Dancu then indicates the American sociological efforts within the behaviorist movement of the fifties as source of an alternative. Especially in the work of H. Hyman, it became almost axiomatic that the political socialization of the individual takes place under the strong auspices of two essential factors: the family as source of partisan tendencies and the political organizations as bridges between family and society.¹⁹ Moreover, the author

¹⁹ Dancu indicates here Hyman's *Political Socialization. A Study In The Psychology Of Political Behavior*, Glencoe, The Free Press, New York, 1959;

points out that hundreds of studies of electoral sociology seemed at a given moment to indicate that partisan identifications start in childhood and remain stable throughout individual's life. The author employed a complex mechanism of research in which the political vocabulary as indicator of political socialization was divided in four categories: common vocabulary (e.g. republic, liberty, independence); vocabulary for values, mechanisms and democratic institutions (e.g. law, candidate, Securitate²⁰, counselor, minister); partisan vocabulary (e.g. political party, extremist, capitalism, dictatorship); and social vocabulary (e.g. social class, trade union, American, money, revolution, West). The research was done in 1996 and the respondents were 1116 children from a few large cities of Transylvania, in the western part of the country, where indicators of civic engagement are anyway positive when compared to the rest of Romania according to another survey as illustrated in chart 6 by the density of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) throughout the country.

Dancu reaches some interesting conclusions in his study and one of the most significant within the context of this paper is that, in spite of being a world of the adults, the political arena permeates all segments of the society (the children included, of course) through its symbology. Political socialization is a process that starts with the constitution of the vocabulary and of a symbolic universe consisting of three main components: the community, the democratic institutions, and the social authority. (Dancu, 1999: 66). It is therefore essential to understand that the educational process, which remains in our times under the patronage of the state and other more or less state related agents, is directly responsible for the development of the political culture of the young.

Dancu warns that in Romania the civic education is comparable with the French one because of its low level of development and the fact that it is dominated by the exalting of patriotic and moral values. He criticizes the centrality of history as a subject matter in school, with its appeal to the emotional ideas of unity at any price, independence and common interest.²¹ These cannot be, the author suggests, but detrimental to a rational civic education in which the political arena to welcome the conscious participation of the individual as an active and responsible political actor.

²⁰ The name under which the political police of the communist regime was widely known;

²¹ Ibid., p. 67;

Chart 6 is suggestive of another important aspect: civic engagement is higher, the chart shows, in the western part of the country, in Transylvania, Crişana, and Banat. It was in this civically developed western part of Romania that Dancu tried to search for indicators of political socialization, most probably because respondents were supposed to be there more connected to the subject of the research. I insert below only two tables illustrating the results of Dancu's research, which I consider relevant for my own study.

Table 17 (2) *The common political vocabulary. Indicators of non-knowledge and hostility.*

	<i>I don't know the word</i>	<i>I don't like what it denominates</i>
	Number of appearances	Number of appearances
State	1	21
Republic	15	57
Banner (National flag)	0	13
Nation	10	15
Patria (homeland)	0	3
Equality	1	8
Independence	4	4
Liberty	0	1
<i>Total</i>	4	15

Table 18 (3) *The vocabulary of democratic mechanisms and institutions. Indicators of non-knowledge and hostility.*

	<i>I don't know the word</i>	<i>I don't like what it denominates</i>
	Number of appearances	Number of appearances
Candidate	12	53
Law	1	15
Mayor	3	31
Counselor	32	42
Minister	5	45
Administration	14	37
Law enforcement forces	23	84
Taxes	18	80
Gendarmes	4	59
Citizen	5	7
Democracy	8	20
Armed forces	1	60
Securitate	7	70
<i>Total</i>	11	46

Since Dancu does not jump hastily to conclusions and limits them to the cognitive aspects of political culture, I shall interpret the figures presented above from my own perspective.

Firstly, it should be noted that some children do not like what the words 'state' and 'republic' denominate, with the mention that only one answer indicated that the subject in question did not know what the word 'state' denominated. So, respondents know what that is that they do not like. Secondly, table 18 shows clearly that almost all words included in it denominate entities the respondents do not like more or less, with the exception of only two words: 'law' and 'citizen'. Dancu asserts at this point that the word 'citizen', in spite of being easily recognized by the children questioned in its affective dimension, is represented in a position outside the politicized area, as inhabitant of an area, *city-zen* or *village-zen*. (Dancu, 1999: 66). Moreover, it is interesting to see that the children interviewed are highly hostile toward taxes and law enforcement forces and this could hardly be anything but the reflection upon them of their parents' views. Democracy, not surprisingly considering the other surveys analyzed in this section, is looked upon with a low level of hostility.

Considering all this information about the Romanians' perception of the political, let us approach now civic engagement in Romania. One important feature of the scientific approach to this aspect of the Romanian civil society is that it is mainly focused on the non-governmental organizations as essential indicators of civic activism and the preliminary report on the *Civicus Index* on Civil Society Project in Romania²² confirms this tendency. As underlined on many occasions in this paper, the systematic study of the Romanian civil society is only at its beginning. Deeper analyses of the manifestations of civic engagement at the level of individuals and specific groups are imperatively needed if the academic world in that country and elsewhere is willing to become capable of effectively monitoring the evolutions in the political aspects of human behavior. However, the study in question provides valuable information for the purpose of this paper.

The authors underscore from the outset that "the lack of a coherent public sector policy [in Romania] as well as the recent decline of foreign funding and scarcity of domestic resources account for the rather weak institutional and operational capacity of

²² For details in English see, Epure C., Tiganescu O., and Vamesu A., *Romanian Civil Society: An Agenda For Progress. A Preliminary Report On The Civicus Index On Civil Society Project In Romania*, Civicus Index On Civil Society, Occasional Papers Series, Volume I, Issue 9, Civil Society Development Foundation, Bucharest, August 2001. Source: www.fdsc.ro;

organizations.” (Epure et al, 2001). Indeed, NGOs or civil society organizations (CSOs) depend on funding, be it local or foreign. The Civil Society Development Foundation, at the request of which the study analyzed here was conducted, is one of those institutions involved in and committed to the development of civil society in Romania and it depends itself on various financial resources among which a special role continues to be played, for instance, by the Soros Foundation for and Open Society with an indispensable American support. But the activity of any civil society organization comes at a given moment in contradiction with specific policies of national governments in general. Hence, the funding, which necessarily involves the respective governments, is somehow hindered at times directly or indirectly by those governments. In Romania this situation is even more worsened by the scarcity of resources in an economy that still has not recovered after the collapse of the communist regime and is struggling with various scourges among which corruption is the most damaging. Moreover, in the study there are included some very harsh statements (Epure et al, 2001: 14) over the issue and they are worth being presented here since, in my opinion, they reflect the reality of civil society movement in Romania at present.

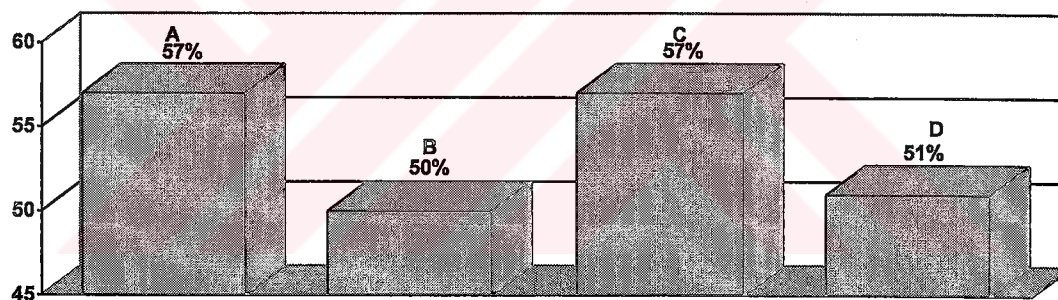
“Public administration does not involve enough, while fictive organizations and those committing illegal actions are discrediting the non-governmental sector.”

“In many cases Romanian NGOs emerged as a result of donors’ specific needs, or a result of a grant”

The statements above reflect a situation that I am very much aware of as a Romanian and they are confirmed by the research results. Another aspect underlined in the study is a specific feature of the post-communist societies, that is, the distrust in hierarchies. For more than four decades hierarchies have been marked by the confiscation of authority by the communist elites who, thus, imposed the concentration of the decision-making at the top of all hierarchies in all organizations, be them political, economic, or of any other nature. This *totalitarianism* led to the depersonalization of leadership and the personalization, in turn, of the idea of hierarchy in one single individual, the dictator, who embodied and controlled both the people and the space of their interaction, that is, the very civil society whose revitalization is subject of much

debate now in all former communist countries. The trauma is general but the emergence of a healthy and stable civil society cannot be possible but under the coordinated efforts of the exponents of civil society, the civil society organizations. Coordination means efficient and accepted leadership of action and this was exactly where the inherited distrust in hierarchy *per se* hit badly. The consequence is not an anarchic situation, but one in which suspicion about the decisional acts is a generalized attitude. These preliminary specifications help the understanding of the figures presented in this section. In chart 4 it is figured statistically the perception of CSOs' role in the Romanian society. 'Service role' denominates the most common form of contribution to the society and in the case of civil society organizations it can take the form of services in the field of education, social services and health care, culture and recreation, housing or micro-economic development.

Chart 4 (10 in the Report). *The Service Role of Civil Society Organizations*²³

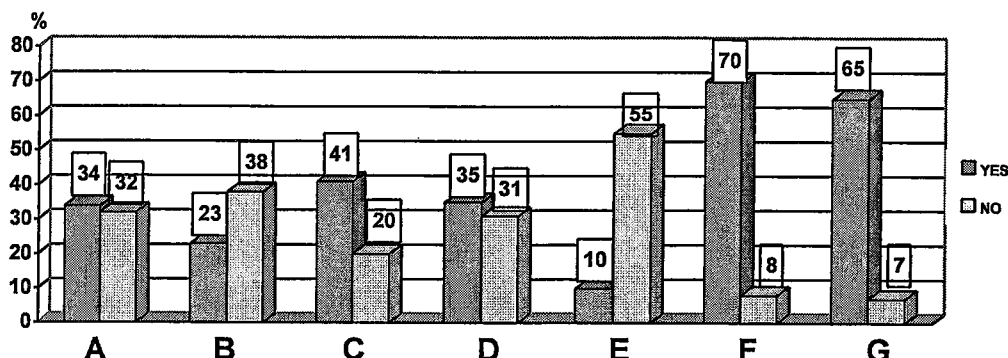


- A: CSOs succeed in benefiting public good;
- B: CSOs improve the lives of the people they are working with;
- C: The goods and services CSOs produce reflect the needs and priorities of their constituents and communities;
- D: CSOs are able to provide their services in a manner that would not be possible for the state or for business.

The chart indicates that around half of the respondents consider that CSOs provide services the state could not be able to provide or, at least, not with the same efficiency. However, it should be also noted that 57% of the respondents consider that CSOs, "reflect the needs and priorities of their constituents and communities ." The following chart refines the meaning of this assertion.

²³ The percentages indicate the share of respondents who agree or fully agree with the statement;

Chart 5 (12). The Role of CSOs in Public Policy Elaboration



- A: People believe that the actions of the CSOs are in the line with their opinions;
- B: CSOs are successful in mobilizing the disadvantaged groups in society;
- C: CSOs are successful in representing their members' interests;
- D: CSOs are successful in monitoring government in implementing policies;
- E: CSOs cooperate with government in implementing policies;
- F: CSOs are successful in influencing public policies in favor of their members and clients;
- G: CSOs are not invited to participate in the generation and discussion of legislation.

The main conclusion that could be drawn from chart 5 is that civil society organizations are not welcomed by legislative bodies as participants in the legislative process but influence and contribute only to the implementation of public policies. However, as it can be seen in the balance of responses over statement F, most of the interviewed consider that civil society organizations “are successful in influencing public policies in favor of their members and clients” and but, in the view of the respondents, do not cooperate with the government officials over the implementation of policies. These apparently contradictory answers are suggestive of the fact that those organizations, considering also the positive opinions over statement C, are much more focused strictly on meeting their members' expectations than on the concerted enhancement of civic engagement throughout the Romanian society as such. This confirms my previously stated impression that civil society is viewed there more as an instrument than as a space proper in which civic engagement to be deemed as a virtue *per se*. We see in Romania, therefore, the local civil society at a stage of pre-formation, in which norms of conduct recently *imported* from the West are not and may even never be fully internalized in that respective society. The density of CSOs/NGOs in Romania by historical regions as

presented in the chart below indicates not only how they are dispersed throughout the country, but also why the situation is so.

Chart 6 (3). NGO density in Romania by historical regions

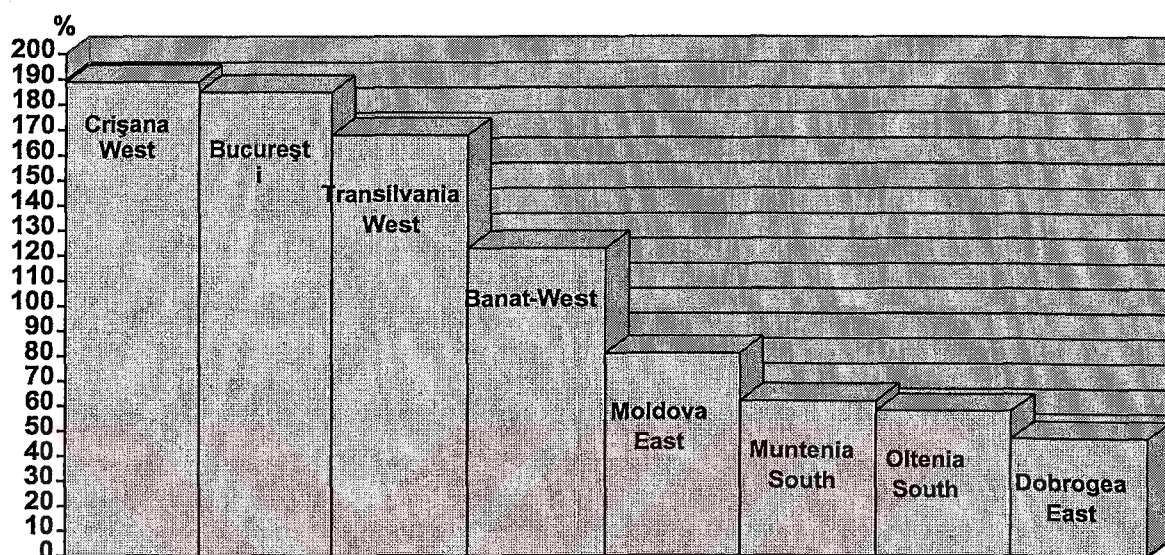


Chart 6 ‘says’ that civil society organizations, or non-governmental organizations are more present in the western part of the country where there has always been traditionally a stronger closeness to the western culture due to German and Hungarian influences, with a higher rate of urbanization than in the east and south. The authors of the study in question underscore the fact that only 14% of the NGOs are located in rural areas, while 86% can be found in towns and cities.²⁴ In conclusion, the report suggests that the intra-sectoral and inter-sectoral cooperation between these organizations is weak due to the lack of information and projects fostering partnership between them. Moreover, the organizations lack transparency of their activities and are recommended to take responsibility for the use of the financial resources they have at hand. The two very serious assertions presented here (page 44 of this study) suggest that the credibility of civil society development is highly endangered by the unilateral and subjective attitudes and actions of those who sponsor or establish the organizations in question. The lack of

²⁴ At least this is the data suggested by the *Romanian Civil Society: An Agenda For Progress. A Preliminary Report On The Civicus Index On Civil Society Project In Romania*, p. 11;

coordination of activities is also pointed at in the report, together with the damaging consequences this situation impinges upon the process as a whole.

Basically, one certain conclusion that can be drawn from the analysis of all these studies is that civil society is at the beginning of its formation in Romania and it is viewed still as an instrument in the broader process of society's transition from a communist, totalitarian setting toward democracy and respect for its values. Because of these aspects it is still premature to talk about civic engagement in Romania and in ex-communist countries in general by taking as reference point the parameters registered in the American society. Civil society organizations, as illustrated by charts 4 and 5, are suspected of focusing their attention too much on meeting the interests of their members in ways that are not always characterized by transparency. People come in contact to patterns of partisanship in childhood and we can say that it is primarily in the family that children get their attitude of non-agreement with the state policies and distrust in political institutions. This is not hard to understand when considering the low living standards and the abundance of demagogical political discourse in the media. Consequently, no wonder that the voter turnout indicators in parliamentary and presidential elections are lower and lower with every four-year period passing, as shown in table 19.

Table 19. Parliamentary Presidential Elections in Romania – Voter Turnout

	May 1990	September 1992		November 1996		November 2000	
		First Round	Second Round (Presidential Elections only)	First Round	Second Round (Presidential Elections only)	First Round	Second Round (Presidential Elections only)
Number of Registered Voters	17,200,720	16,380,663	16,380,663	17,218,654	17,218,654	17,699,727	17,699,727
Voter Turnout	86,19%	76,29%	73,23%	76,01%	75,90%	65,31%	57,50%

Source: Statistical Yearbook Of Romania

However, in line with the suggestions made by Daniel-Louis Seiler and Cristian Pirvulescu, I consider that a better understanding of the development of political attitudes and orientations in Romania and in any other ex-communist Balkan countries can be achieved not only by tracing the influences coming from the communist past but also by

taking into account those coming from an earlier cultural tradition. This cultural tradition can be characterized as a mosaic-like whole in which what is called Balkanism has its own part. The role of the elite, for instance, is very important for the political culture and the elite in the geographical and historical area indicated here has been marked by influences not exclusively western throughout history. It will be interesting to see, for instance, how the argumentation for maintaining the old values and orientations versus the introduction and adoption of western models developed. Before that, however, let us close this chapter by listing a few of the conclusions that can be drawn from the analysis made up to now.

1.3.2. Preliminary Conclusions

A few conclusions can be drawn from the study of the works presented above. First, that the comparative method of Almond and Verba in *Civic Culture*, in spite of its high scientific level, has the disadvantage of having taken as subjects of comparison five countries with cultural backgrounds so different that the study should have either went deeper into their nature, or upper, to a superior level of analysis. This second alternative will be tried in the following chapter of this paper. Consequently, the book demonstrates America's superiority in the realm and almost nothing else about American political culture in itself, about its perspectives especially. We have there a static picture that shows the *what* and the *how* of the American political at a point and not in development. It is, therefore, a work worth employing in the study of the method, but not in understanding fully the American culture as such, in its political aspects. When scrutinizing the results of the research undertaken by Almond and Verba, I could see only angels and sinners in a black & white movie about what America has to offer to the world, that is, an exemplary civic culture in the absence of which democracy is impossible. There is no word about what that fine French traveler and political scientist depicted as the potentially negative aspect of the American democracy – the tyranny of majority. During my own five-months stay in the United States, in 1999-2000, I could see and feel it; American civic engagement seemed to me more of an internal aspect of

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DOKÜMAN İZLENİM BÜROSU

isolated communities than a value in itself, with national dimensions. Moreover, in *Civic Culture* we come to understand which are those values and attitudes indispensable for democracy to be a stable political system. However, it should be understood that those values and attitudes *are not* those imperatively necessary for the stability of the political system *per se*, an issue broached in the following chapter of this paper as an alternative approach to the *political*.

On the other hand, Robert D. Putnam's *Bowling Alone* gives an understanding of the subject from a perspective that is even broader than expected initially. He managed to cover incredibly long periods of time and analyze patterns of civic behavior more complex than many other scholars. However, Putnam's research remains in the perimeter of the traditional approaches to the respective phenomenon of decline. It is true that he suggested on many occasions that scholars should look for remedies somewhere in the domain of policy-making. In an article published in the *Journal of Democracy*, he stated that, "we need to explore creatively how public policy impinges on (or might impinge on) social-capital formation. In some well-known instances, public policy has destroyed highly effective social networks and norms. American slum-clearance policy of the 1950s and 1960s, for example, renovated physical capital, but at a very high cost to existing social capital." (Putnam, 1995: 76-77). However, Putnam focuses our attention here on policies, on ways of employing the political as to revitalize social bonds and, implicitly, civic engagement. The questioning of the political *per se* is not even thought of. In other words, he deals with the future only in terms of solutions for the improvement of the community life in America and says nothing about what would be an overall explanation of the phenomenon valid not only for the present but also for the future. Civic movements, for instance, belong to the past since their aims have been achieved. Many other objectives will continue to arise but there is no word in the academic world about *why*, about the big WHY behind these periodic uprisings of civic feelings in the name of some circumstantial social or political ideals; no word about *why* the text of history itself is written with sentences of civic action sometimes erupting in violent forms which should not be seen as separated from the peaceful, positive civism. Putnam does not go into exploring for deeper and persistent causes of the collapse of the American community. Moreover, both studies quantify data to the extreme and leave little room for

speculation. At a first look, this seems to be a good approach but not, in my opinion, when analyzing cultures, especially political culture.

Almond and Verba made history by defining political culture in terms of people's attitudes. However, they placed the concept in the academic literature together with their quantitative analysis. The Americans' weakness for numbers was satisfied but not truly inquisitive minds, for they cannot accept such minimal definitions. Robert D. Putnam and many other political scientists followed this trend and the result is now that we talk about culture by means of a tabular language that can be interpreted in various ways. However, all these interpretations do not manage to offer definitions of what we *are*, of what one culture or another *is about*. The answer to such a question is the only one, in my opinion, that would help us understand the causes for decline in our attachment to what our governments stand for. Table 20, the last in this study, shows that the American society at the time Almond and Verba published *Civic Culture* has changed dramatically. Those people who took pride in their political institutions in the fifties are more and more disappointed with their government. The percentage of those who tend to trust the politicians in Washington do what is right only some times is on an ascending trend, while the ones trusting the government in the American capital are fewer and fewer with every year passing.

Table 20. National Election Studies (NES).

Q: "How much of the time do you think you can trust the government in Washington to do what is right- just about always, most of the time or only some of the time?"

Trust the Federal Government 1958-1998

Years	58	64	66	70	72	76	78	80	82	84	86	88	90	92	94	96	98
None of the Time	0	0	2	0	1	1	4	4	3	1	2	2	2	2	3	1	1
Some of the Time	23	22	28	44	44	62	64	69	62	53	57	56	69	68	74	66	58
Most of the Time	57	62	48	47	48	30	27	23	31	40	35	36	25	26	19	30	36
Just About Always	16	14	17	6	5	3	2	2	2	4	3	4	3	3	2	3	4
Don't Know, Depends	4	1	4	2	2	3	3	2	3	2	2	1	1	1	1	0	1

Percentage within study year. Source: The National Election Studies

What to expect from the future? The answer to this question might come from the very dramatic events America passes through right now. After the disastrous terrorist attacks in New York and Washington on September 11, 2001, America launched its war

against terror whose aims and end tend to be more and more blurred. The attention of the government is increasingly diverted from the lack of economic coherence inside the United States toward more or less imaginary political and military targets outside America. Under these conditions, voices such as the one of the Republican Senator Tom DeLay, known as a loyal supporter of the White House, sounded at least alarming when, after President George W. Bush's ultimatum to Saddam Hüsseyin on March 17, called for an end to debate about how to proceed on Iraq, suggesting that lawmakers keep any thoughts of disagreement to themselves. The gap between policy and lawmakers seems to increase and so will most probably do the distance between the political class and the American people.

By comparing the two political cultures in this study, we could see clearly that not only the absence of mobilizing objectives is inductive of decline in political participation. The performance of the government is also a decisive factor, while economic, political and social crises can also be included in the long list of causes of political alienation. We saw how the family environment in the process of achievement of political vocabulary decisively influences Romanian children. They are potentially alienated politically from early ages due to various patterns of alienation already existing among their parents and relatives (see again Table 6). This hypothesis must not be excluded when making prognosis about the future development of any other culture and this means that an already installed alienation among the Americans should not be expected to pass as swiftly as a bad dream following some magic policies of the federal or state governments. People in both countries are disappointed with the performance of some specific politicians or generations of politicians, indeed, but the research efforts of Robert Putnam show that this disappointment increased despite of some governments being highly professional in time. One cannot have the same perspective over the developments in Romania due to the short history of its democratic regime but even in this short period of time the decline in people's trust in the national government and their increasing reluctance to participate in the electoral process is indicative of their growing disappointment already. Moreover, the political regimes in the post-communist Romania inherited from the totalitarian age a tendency toward populism as the most available method of counter-attacking mass protests and general contestation. Populist policies are

popular but not rational; they satisfy the masses but do not represent efficient solutions to the various economic, social, or political issues that governments face in their activity. In the short run, they give people the sense that the government cares for them; in the long run, they prove the contrary. Populism divides society basically in two main groups: those who are for and those who are against the party proposing them. Violent revolution is impossible since populism is about popular support. A populist regime is therefore based on popular support that becomes within this context irrational since it cannot control the policy implementation instruments. A populist regime also respects, at the same time, the basic criteria of modern democracy, including the market economy, but in the end a charismatic leader plays the decisive role, especially through the support of a disciplined party structure capable of making the citizens understand that the situation of the state is so that there is a manifest need for unconditional support to the government. To Romanians, such facts are very much familiar and the resemblance with what happens nowadays in the American politics is striking. President George W. Bush dividing the world in those who are against or with America did not address the international community only, but the American community as well. The Republican Senator quoted above completes a scenario one could not have probably imagined a few years ago, before the two hijacked planes perforated the heart and the brains of the American supremacy in the world. American democracy contains, as any other democracy does, the seed of populism as one of the most dangerous threats toward itself.

As it could be seen, the decline in the voter turnout is a reality in both countries. The situation is the result of a long and gradual process in the United States. In Romania, the similar decline appeared in thirteen years only, a fact indicative of causes other than those present in America. In the former communist country the political, economic, and social upheavals marked dramatically the development of civil society. People's attitudes toward the political process are dominated by a fierce partisanship and by tendencies to alienation that do not indicate, as I have pointed out, disappointment with democracy as such, but with the way politicians do politics. Most of the Romanian respondents in one survey were convinced they had a good understanding of the political issues (Table 16). This fact means that they are at least potentially capable of conceiving of themselves in decisional positions over political issues and that, implicitly, they would know what to

do. The very negative attitudes in both countries show that not only the Americans but the Romanians, too, perceive increasingly that they should get a proper output from a political system they also perceive themselves as part of. The participation in itself says little – what matters is whether individuals perceive what is happening with them within the political system, that is, the cognitive relation between them and the political. All this happens within the unquestionable perimeter of democracy. However, the actual political regime in Romania and many other countries in Eastern Europe are young on es, most probably incapable of developing further democratic institutions outside the protective umbrella of the western democracy. When both worlds came into contact after 1989, few wondered how would the East affect the West. Most scholars made prognoses about how the East would manage to adopt the political and economic reforms set as standards by the European Union but few wondered how this mélange would affect democracy itself. In my opinion, westerners could look at what happens in the processes of transition to democracy in the East to see, like in a laboratory, what could at any time happen in their own societies. In a very short period of time citizens of Romania were able to perceive not only the bad performance of their successive governments, but also the fact that, for instance, politicians are corrupted. After more than two centuries of glorious democracy in their own country, Americans started only now to admit of their government being corruptible. The cases of mismanagement and fiscal evasion made public after September 2001 showed fully this aspect. The obvious adversity of the Romanian public opinion toward the state could, therefore, become an American reality at any time and, as suggested above, it might last for many generations to come.

That glorious époque of high political and civic participation in America passed long ago. One political thinker suggested that exactly those decades were those in which political debate was virtually absent from the American society. This aspect was perceivable after the Cold War ended. He points out that, “The failure of the cold warriors, however, rests with their inability or unwillingness to convey their own sense of humility and tragedy to Americans at large. While American political debate has always been circumscribed by its own special history, the period between 1948 and the early 1960s was one in which political conversation was largely absent. When it did reemerge with the debate over the war in Vietnam, all the discussants seem to suffer from a

generation of relative silence.” (Abbot, 1999: 298). In other words, the post-World War II period was one in which the political agenda simply replaced the political debate. State foreign policy confiscated the stage of political engagement and little room was left for the voices of the individual citizens to be heard shouting their real demands. The process being a gradual one in the United States, it could not become as alarming as it is now perceived in Romania but only when some exceptional scholars such as Robert Putnam and others transformed the issue into an academic subject. By comparing here some manifestations of the two nations’ *politicalness* I have reached the conclusion that no matter their very different cultural and historical backgrounds, no matter the different stages of political, economic, and social development, two essential constants characterize the current attitudinal aspects of the political culture of both Americans and Romanians: attachment to democracy as value *per se*, and a growing distrust in political institutions and politicians. These apparently contradictory attitudes cannot be explained, in my opinion, by simply pointing at the mistakes done by politicians, or at the effects of, for instance, global or regional economic ups and downs that are only particular phenomena in a world defined by many other forms of socialization. The two essential characteristics of people’s attitudes can be explained only by breaking the syntagma *political culture* in two and by engaging in the Sisyphean work of defining each of the two essential concepts. Since the concept of culture is a very broad one, encompassing almost everything about particular human beings or particular groups of human beings, I limit now to interpreting it in its cognitive aspects, that is, *culture as the knowledge*. The definition of the political becomes crucial here in my opinion. I shall approach it in the next chapter under the very perspective of the knowledge about it, that is, *knowledge about political*. This will be placed under Mattei Dogan’s interpretation presented in earlier according to which the erosion in people’s trust in democratic institutions is highly indicative of their political maturation. The next chapter represents my proposal for a new definition of the political understood as a result of such a process of maturation, a definition in the light of which, I hope, the decline of trust in political institutions and politicians will be seen loaded with significances more profound than expected. That is because the two constants in political attitudes as indicated above and the development of history itself tell me that rather sooner than later democracy will become the next one to

fall into disgrace. However, the following chapter is not an attempt at the salvation of democracy or its institutions and politicians. What I want to prove is merely that our more than two thousand years interpretation of the political, starting especially with Aristotle, brought us to alienation from that political as traditionally understood. The next chapter will provide in the end the criterion necessary for a different interpretation of the political culture in its historical process of maturation. We shall come back then to the two countries and test that purely philosophical criterion by applying it to their history and see if the idea is worth any good. I am confident, however, that many interesting surprises are awaiting us beyond our traditional way of understanding.



CHAPTER II. THE POLITICAL

“When philosophy attends to its essence it does not make forward strides at all. It remains where it is in order constantly to think the Same. Progression, that is, progression forward from this place, is a mistake that follows thinking as the shadow itself casts”

Martin Heidegger

The definition of the political culture in all studies I have come across to starts invariably from the presupposition of the political as an already agreed upon concept. It is seen as *something* that happens in the society. Man makes any attempt at redefining or at least reforming it with this essential presupposition in mind. Romanian political thought is only now coming out of the monolithic age of totalitarianism. Political thinkers there still try to liberate themselves from the Marxist bond and become more liberal not only in options, but also deep in their beliefs. In contemporary America, on the other hand, even the enthusiasm necessary for the development of alternative questions on the subject seems to have vanished. In the words of Judith Shklar, “American political theory has long been neglected. It has been charged with an obsessive and unconscious commitment to a liberal faith that prevents it from asking profound and critical questions. Incapable of envisaging alternatives, American political thought is said to be mired in the legacy of John Locke and a mindless optimism. The fact that there have always been many lively controversies, moreover, does nothing to dispel this bland uniformity, because all parties are at some level said to be liberal. In any event, our petty intellectual squabbles are mere shadow-boxing compared to the *real thing*, the kind of ideological combat that feudalism and class war generated in Europe.” (Shklar, 1998: 91). Therefore, the American political thinker proposes a return to the original political thought of the Founding Fathers. Shklar admits implicitly here of the American intellectual indebtedness to Europe, a fact with particular significance within the context of this paper. The intellectual effervescence around the elementary thinking of the political is fading in both countries we study here. This genuine thinking of the political has been gradually replaced by the political

philosophy throughout all western civilization and now scholars decry the devaluation of even such an approach in America. In Heideggerian view, philosophy is the thinking of thinking in the sense that it is an indirect approach to the very objects of thinking. His entire intellectual effort was intended to remind man, as the subject in the sentence of thinking, that he should not forget this very simple fact, in the sense indicated in the motto to this chapter. Some within the Romanian academic circles suggested that after the collapse of the communist regime Romanian political thought had the chance to start anew from such a view and revitalize not only the approach to the political at home, but also in itself. Unfortunately, it could not resist the influence of the American understanding of man's *politicalness* and of the democracy as necessary and sufficient for the fulfillment of that politicalness. For this reason if nothing else the comparative approach to these two political cultures is, in my view, extremely important.

I have called one an *exporter* and the other an *importer* of what is practically the same understanding of the political and we see, I think, exactly because of that an almost similar growth in political alienation in the two countries. It is my opinion that the American political thought is the only source of revitalization for the political culture in America, Romania, and elsewhere. I shall not insist on explaining this position at this moment simply because this entire chapter is intended to do so. And I agree with Judith Shklar upon the fact that the American political theory has been neglected, but I definitely do not believe in the possibility of revitalizing it by a return to the Founding Fathers of the United States. The only way to do it is merely by going beyond any of our 'founding fathers', beyond any founding in our minds, by redefining the *political* as such, since it is not a particular American politicalness that has been 'forgotten', but also a Romanian, Turkish, Japanese, or Kenyan politicalness. Man's politicalness has become nothing but a simple object among others of what we so emphatically call sometimes policy. Another American thinker asserts that, "During the height of the Cold War it seemed possible for writers to criticize American policy in its particulars, but rarely were there theoretical attempts to present alternatives." (Abbot, 1999: 278). In this case, too, what Philip Abbot understands by alternatives is something to replace a particular policy of the American government, and not an alternative presented by the political thought to what it has created itself up to now, that is, an alternative to the current, old

understanding of the political. We remember that the two essential characteristics of people's political attitudes in two culturally different countries, Romania and the United States of America, were attachment to democracy as value and an increasing distrust in politicians and political institutions. Politicians and political institutions, unfortunately, use exactly the protecting aura of democracy to promote themselves as the right ones to lead the political community. In this game, the meaning of democracy and, much worse, the meaning of the *political* have been perverted and misunderstood probably all throughout history.

2.1. HEIDEGGER AND THE POSSIBILITY OF A NEW PHILOSOPHICAL APPROACH TO THE POLITICAL

Analyzing the political aspect of two so different cultures is undoubtedly a challenging task. As I have pointed out in the beginning of this study, the research on *political* cultures has been invariably based up to now on the understanding of the *political as civic*, preferably *participative*. Man *is* political provided that he participates in the political process in the public sphere. From this perspective, the citizens, no matter how much credit they are given, are still evaluated in their relations with the *political* as framed by and within the State. Individuals count politically only inasmuch as they participate within this given framework. The approach of the American and Romanian political cultures undertaken here is suggestive of the fact that a redefinition of the *political* might be necessary. Within the two cultures, the perception of the nature of the State does not differ as much as one might think. The State *is* for an overwhelming majority of people that supreme institution that we put an input into (e.g. taxes, petitions, expectations, votes) hoping to get an output from (e.g. a proper health care or education, a well administered market, functional public services). The analysis done in the previous chapter showed that even the Romanians, who were not very much aware of these things thirteen years ago, have come to perceive themselves as part of the political system as a whole. They are also able to indicate that the State is the patron of our societies and the political happens within the society under that high patronage. It is this very perspective that I shall try to touch now. A fundamentally different definition of the political as the

Political will prove eventually to be essential for the understanding of American and Balkan cultures and history in perspective.

Gabriel Almond and Sydney Verba developed a concept of political culture as civic culture, or culture of civic/political participation. They then put it into practice by applying the theoretical concept to the realities in five different societies. They reached interesting and valuable conclusions that are true from the perspective of their own definition of the *political*. Their conclusion is merely that the American political culture is the most advanced, and it is also placed at the top of a suggested political axiology in which the degree of people's participation in the political process is the criterion. However, this view, otherwise commendable from the point of view of its scientific instrumentation, lacks in perspective in the sense that it does not clarify, for instance, what the orientation of the political America in its entirety actually is. We saw that Putnam offered that perspective but I have pointed out that in his studies man's politicalness is still placed within the public sphere and dependent on it. The theory exposed in *Civic Culture*, too, approaches the concept of political culture from the perspective of individuals' participation and places that participation within the given context defined by the State and, by doing so, it limits the horizons of participation itself. I consider these approaches bound to be static since they measure human attitudes within a political environment construed as static, while human attitudes are naturally defined by contingency – they simply *can* change. Viewed from a broad perspective, as I shall try to demonstrate in this chapter, the American political culture, in my own definition, is not at the qualitative top of political cultures at least because it is not going the progressive direction its sycophants suggest it does. In the last chapter of this study I shall test my own definition of the *Political* by applying it to various episodes in the American and Balkan history. The test will prove, I hope, the validity of this interpretation of the *Political* as developed in the next pages. Needless to say why the redefinition of the Political is bound to be philosophical, since all scholarly literature has been based on this concept as developed within philosophical thought from Plato and Aristotle onwards. My point of focus is still the cognitive relation between man and the political but not the political from outside him; it is the Political in Man, or Man's *politicalness*, and not the

remote space of the public sphere to which the State belongs, too, and which is far from human nature since it is a space of exercise of Man's being, and not his Being itself.

Philosophy as such is actually something we think we do every day. We philosophize by thinking about various things and their even more various aspects. However, as scholars have been suggesting since Heidegger reevaluated the domain, the fundamental function of philosophy is *thinking* thinking. In this way philosophers give answers to many essential questions about our being or invent questions that have not been asked before. They define concepts which become instruments of our daily judgments sooner than we might imagine. For instance, the separation of powers and the checks and balances system, that Americans are so much proud of, originate in the philosophic effort of conceptualization undertaken in the beginning of the eighteenth century by the French Baron de Montesquieu. Even prosaic notions such as the 'retirement payment', or 'freedom of speech' are products of centuries of philosophic inquiries into the nature of man and in relation with the society as such.

Philosophy's probably most profound challenge came with the German philosopher Martin Heidegger (born September 26th, 1889, in the Black Forest region of Messkirch). He radically changed the thematic of entire philosophy by pointing out that man has forgotten to think in the simple terms of pure thinking about his own being and followed the wrong path indicated by the ancient thought and especially by Plato and Aristotle. In this way, our simple knowledge of us has become the science of us and philosophy is in the same relation with thinking – it is a false knowledge depending on concepts staying between man and understanding; it is knowledge of the second degree. Heidegger saw as the only solution the very reconstruction of the entire human knowledge. He then took practically the responsibility of starting this incredible project by asking the fundamental question of Being itself. He thus pointed out that our interpretation of Being as eternal presence, dating from Plato and Aristotle, is just one single interpretation and *not* the only one. My approach to the Heideggerian thought in this paper will follow the interpretation of the late Leo Strauss, one of the significant political thinkers in the twentieth century. Strauss was among those few who could conceive of Heidegger's philosophy as already relevant within the realm of political thought. I must warn the reader that Heidegger's inquiry is so profound and some see it

so much beyond contemporary human capacity of understanding while, at the same time, so simple, that one must take him for either the greatest thinker in history or the greatest crook. Our difficulty of understanding Heidegger comes actually from the simplicity of his message that we cannot understand anymore because more than two thousand years of philosophy diverted our attention from how the very being of things is actually possible. For instance, one can say that, "there is a pen on the table". From this simple sentence could emerge at least two simple and perfectly logical questions: *where is the pen?*, and *what is there on the table?* However, for all instances where the verb *to be* is involved, Heidegger suggested, we do not ask the fundamental question that is, *what is Being*, or what does *to be* mean? The answer to such a question, he believed, would give us an incredibly deeper understanding of our existence and Heidegger pointed out that Man has *forgotten* asking it because the question in itself had been given an answer long ago by Aristotle whose philosophy consecrated Being as the Eternal and the particular beings (the *being* of pen, of red, or the being of *man*) as only particular manifestations of that Being. And in this way the answered question was to be forgotten, as a perennially solved problem. For example, this is how religion, among other expressions of human civilization, was possible. The interpretation of Being as the Eternal made it easy for apostles of all religions in history to give the Eternal a name and proclaim it God, while humanity itself became, automatically, just an inferior manifestation of that Eternal.

By giving such an answer to the fundamental question of being, Heidegger asserts, Plato and Aristotle practically closed the debate and determined the mankind forget the very possibility of such a question. Moreover, this led to what Heidegger called the *withdrawal* of Being which he considered to be the very essence of Western civilization as illustrated by the emergence, at that time, of moral nihilism and its political expressions, Americanism, Nazism, and Marxism²⁵. He considered all the three to be forms of political life at the end of modernity and, thus, mere expressions of nihilism. As Leo Strauss pointed out in his monumental *History of Political Philosophy*, all these three political regimes "are characterized by the dictatorship of the public over the private, and by the predominance of natural science, economics, public policy, and technology,"

²⁵ For a full description of this quasiooriginal view, see Heidegger, Martin, *An Introduction To Metaphysics*, Yale University Press, New Heaven, 1959;

which in turn leads to “the consequent reduction of man to a socially produced being.” (Strauss, 1987: 898-899). Hence, the relevance of Heideggerian thought for the philosophical approach to the Political itself.

The German philosopher therefore dedicated his entire life to posing anew this question and to giving it an answer not as limited as Plato’s. In his answer, the meaning of Being is turned, after probably the deepest philosophical inquiry in history, from the Eternal into *what unfolds in Time* or, the identification of Being with History as a creation of Being. In doing so, he basically contests that “‘Being’ is the ‘most universal’ concept: *το ου εδτι καθολου μαλιστα παντων*”, that “the concept of ‘Being’ is indefinable”, and that “‘Being’ is of all concepts the one that is self-evident.” (Heidegger, 1996: 22-23). With this definition Heidegger takes the concept of Being away from the realm of eternal presence in which it was left in Plato’s myth of the cave²⁶ and places it where it actually belongs to, in the realm of change and perpetual transformation. The consequences of this view are still to be explored since scholars unanimously agree upon the fact that the meaning of the Heideggerian work in its entirety is still to be elucidated. Together with the profound implications of this philosophy for the interpretation of philosophy and history of human thought, the Heideggerian theory as developed especially in his mature writings poses critical questions about the concept and essence of technology revealed in the distortedly perceived relation between Being as eternal master and our concrete being as eternal subject.

In line with the Heideggerian interrogation, I approach the political by asking a question that might sound prosaic or even absurd at first sight but, in my opinion, it belongs to the essence of man’s being. The question is: *What is the Political?* The reason for posing such a question is quite simple. Since Being itself becomes subject of redefinition in the Heideggerian thought and the German defines man as the shepherd of Being²⁷ - a position that is totally different from the traditional view according to which man was just a manifestation of the eternal Being - it becomes almost a duty for the true political philosopher to reflect upon the nature of the Political from this new perspective,

²⁶ For Plato’s famous myth of the cave, I have used Plato, *Republic*, John Llewelyn Davies and David James Vaughan (trans.), Introduction by Stephen Watt, Wordsworth Classics, 1997, Book 7, 514a-541-b;

²⁷ The best description of man in Heideggerian theory illustrating this view can be found in Heidegger, Martin, “Letter On Humanism”, in *Basic Writings*, David Farrell Krell (ed.), 2nd edition, 1993, p. 245;

more than two millennia after Aristotle defined man as a political animal. My belief is that there is a crucial connection between Being as described by Heidegger and man's politicalness. It is then essential that we try to understand what is the Political that we say man *is*.

Heidegger pointed out that, especially since Plato and Aristotle, due especially to their prestige, Being has been perceived and used in the process of *thinking* as something beyond time and things or humans are therefore situated somewhere in between Being and Not-Being, with a definite border between these two concepts. Therefore, the entire Western tradition of thinking lacks an exact perception of *Becoming* and is based, implicitly, on the antithetical understanding of Being and Time. In other words, since in the Western tradition things *exist* as manifestations of the eternal Being and their existence is in mere contrast with their non-existence, their Becoming and Change itself are perceived as secondary manifestations of their being. We perceive change but not that 'to be' means 'to change' or 'to become'. Heidegger, on the contrary, asserts that Being-in-Time, or *Being-in-the-World*²⁸ is defining for a true understanding of Being as such; the traditional understanding is regrettably focused only on the *how* of the Being, and not on the *what*. In the world we *are* in a different position than, for instance, acorns. An acorn also *is*, but its Being manifests itself within a different type of Becoming. The acorn becomes an oak and cannot become anything else while Man knows practically nothing about his future and, in Heidegger's view, *cares* about that future and can make choices about that future. Man, in this perspective, is Historical while the history of the acorn is something that *is* only for the Man. Leo Strauss stresses here the Heideggerian view according to which "in this sense man is likewise the only being who is authentically historical, who is actively involved in planning and shaping his future, in making history." (Strauss, 1987: 891-892). It is in this sense that man is the shepherd of Being; he is the only witness of the fact of being and the only one to testify for it. However, man can see that things *are* but cannot see at the same time they *change*; when change in something begins, man usually says something like 'oh, it is not *going to be* as it *was*,' or 'thank god it is not anymore as it was.' Most of the words in these sentences

²⁸ Instead of any glossary of Heideggerian terms, the reader would better understand the meaning of *Being-in-the-world* if consulting Heidegger, 1996, p. 13, 41, 52-62, 104-110, 113-180, 350-366;

talk about time and we see that, for man, the thing that *is* ceases to be the thing it *was* and the same goes for the understanding of the being of man himself. Such an understanding is responsible, I think, for most of the intolerance and conflict in human history. Man has a power man himself cannot grasp yet. This 'yet' is essential here because Heidegger is not a pessimist. Like Strauss later, he believes in the fact that human thought is capable of improvement. Strauss even believed in the emergence of what he called the universal aristocracy of men, of all men, capable of comprehending the importance and responsibility of being men, permanently aware of that. Heidegger's concept of man may be better understood if presented schematically. I try with the table below to visualize this understanding.

Table 21. The Heideggerian understanding of *existenz*:

Man	Animal/Plant	Stone
Existence (<i>Existenz</i>)	Life (<i>Leben</i>)	Immediate existence, or presence-at-hand (<i>Vorhandenheit</i>)
The construer of the world, or the world-builder (<i>Weltbildend</i>)	World-impooverished (<i>Weltarm</i>)	Worldless (<i>Weltlos</i>)
The only one capable of full cognitive relation with the world	Limited or no cognitive relation with the world; they are aware of other beings around them but not of Being <i>per se</i>	No cognitive relation with the world

Man, as viewed by Heidegger, ceases to be that relative of the animal and superior to it only because of some specific capacities. Man is not an animal, but a being among beings with the greatest responsibility imagined: man is responsible for Being itself. Existence is possible, in Heidegger's view, only in language since only when man can *say* that something is that thing actually *is* and this happens in close relation with the knowledge of that *being*. In other words, when we say, for instance, that "the book *is* on the shelf",

or that “the blouse *is* red” this presupposes we have the knowledge about the blouse being on the shelf and not in the house, and about the blouse being red and not just colored. Moreover, we are witnesses and, implicitly, builders of this small world consisting of a book-on-the-shelf and a red blouse. And we also have the knowledge of ourselves knowing all these and being, therefore, in a cognitive relation with this world, while not the same thing can be said about the book and the blouse. The same in the case of the dog when we say, “the dog *is* eating”, with the mention that the dog in question might have the knowledge of us *being* somewhere around. However, dog’s relation with Being itself is inferior since he could not be capable of thinking that “the book *is* on the shelf”, or that “Cyprus *is* an island”. Moreover, the dog could not speak out such thoughts anyway – in the world of a dog they do not exist even potentially and such is that dog’s world is limited and the dog is a world-impo verished being. The stone simply *is* and I say nothing else here precisely for a better understanding. However, man is central for the world as both the world-builder and the one responsible for its being only when man can conceive of him as such. That means, only when he simply thinks he bears such a responsibility. For Heidegger, this is the essence of thinking, pure thinking aware of its action that is, essentially, thinking of Being.

Here he points out one more time to another historical misunderstanding following the ancient Greeks who took thinking away from its true and simple role and placed it in the position of *techne* (τεχνη), thus becoming a technique, an instrument far from its original aim. In the German philosopher’s words, which are crucial for the understanding of my own conception of the political in this paper, “When thinking comes to an end by slipping out of its element it replaces this loss by procuring a validity for itself as *techne*, as an instrument of education and therefore as a classroom matter and latter a cultural concern. By and by philosophy becomes a technique for explaining from highest causes. One no longer thinks; one occupies oneself with ‘philosophy’. In competition with one another, such occupations publicly offer themselves as ‘-isms’ and try to offer more than the others. The dominance of such terms is not accidental. It rests above all in the modern age upon the peculiar dictatorship of the public realm” and within this public realm the ‘private existence’ of the individual is not free but “remains an offshoot that depends upon the public and nourishes itself by a mere withdrawal from

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it.” (Heidegger, 1993: 221). I have inserted this huge fragment from Heidegger’s *Letter On Humanism* just because of what I see as major implications on the understanding of the political, a fact that will become clearer with the following pages.

Probably the most important step taken by Heidegger from the viewpoint of political thought is his conception of the relation between Being and Becoming. He points out that the most familiar understanding of this relation is one in which “What becomes is not yet. What is, no longer needs to become. That which ‘is’ has left all becoming behind it, if indeed it ever became or could become. What ‘is’ [in our traditional understanding] in the authentic sense also stands up against every onslaught from becoming.” (Heidegger, 1959: 101). Heidegger points out that this understanding of the relation between Being and Becoming originates apparent contradiction between Parmenides’ understanding of Being as an immobile eternal and the teachings of Heraclitus who viewed Being as *panta rhei*, all is in flux. Heidegger was deeply convinced Heraclitus was right and viewed the flux as Becoming. However, the German thinker puzzles us here by asserting that, actually, Heraclitus “in truth says the same as Parmenides.” (Heidegger, 1959: 103). Through the science of logics as established by Aristotle, we adopted the conception of Parmenides as separated from Heraclitus’ understanding of Being; the huge prestige of the Stagirite imposed on us an understanding of Being as opposite to Becoming and Change. ‘The cat is in the house’ cannot mean that the cat *becomes* in the house. But even in English language the separation of the two concepts becomes ridiculous. Heidegger is convinced about it: Heraclitus said the same thing as Parmenides because Being and Becoming are the same. This daring thought has actually a very simple reasoning behind it. I prefer to explain it without making appeal to Heidegger’s words for reasons having to do with the difficulty in comprehension for readers unfamiliar with the philosophical inquiry mechanisms of the German. Becoming is part of Being, or Being is Becoming and vice -versa because nothing can be without becoming what it is. The cat is in the house means that the cat becomes in the house; it means that the cat was before somewhere else and has become, or has-come-into, the house. Otherwise it would make no sense to say such a thing and the only and sufficient information one should give and get could be encoded in the simple sentence “the cat *is*.” The same is true about the sentence ‘the blouse *is* red.’

It *is* red because it could have been some other color and it turned out to be red; one cannot say 'red' here without having in mind an alternative of 'red' which makes the blouse being red possible as *becoming* red and not just color. Otherwise it would be enough to say 'the blouse is colored.' Man chooses in his mind that the redness of the blouse is more important to him than its coloredness and 'color' *becomes* in this way 'red'. Change is part of Being, that is, Being is Change because Being would not be possible otherwise. The importance of this understanding for the analysis of systems in general and political systems in particular is decisive. Political systems are shadows of ideas in reality. All starts with the idea that makes possible their emergence. Socialism and communism originate in the ideas of Marxism. Fascism was an ideology on the basis of which the fascist type of totalitarian political system was possible as much as democratic political system would not have come into reality without the philosophical developments in Europe from Aristotle to Putnam. However, those ideas had their time and so happened with the systems they created. Their being presupposes change but they were and are not created with that in mind or, at least, people who come to embody the functions of those systems do not work thinking continuously of the possibility of change attached to those systems. Those people who at a given moment leave the mass of the people to work within the apparatuses that make the working of the entire system possible do nothing but perform the functions of the system as laid down by their creators at the moment of their emergence in reality. Even if change occurs, systems, as lifeless notions, change at a speed rate much inferior to the speed of change in the cases of living entities, such as people. Why? This is simply because man does not dare to conceive of systems changing as fast as his own nature changes.

Tension is therefore at any time present between man's creations and his being and the tension is the highest when the creations we think about are not, for instance, works of art that can be simply forgotten, but systems that master our social and even private life and pretend to have not only the knowledge of their function, but also the knowledge of the change in that function. Political systems face revolt and revolution when their speed of change lags behind the one of their creators, the individual people who had agreed upon their establishment. Before revolt and revolution become serious alternatives, though, disapproval of and disappointment with those systems can be

observed. What if this is exactly what we should understand from the analysis made in the previous chapter in two very different cultural contexts? Even if it is eventually not so, the thinker has the duty to pose questions the way he sees them. My intention is to show in what follows that this understanding affects the very conception of man's politicalness and this, in turn, imposes a fundamentally different view of the political culture in general, and of the two political cultures analyzed here in particular.

In my opinion, the nature of the political was misconstrued from the very beginning of human thought and that means before Plato and Aristotle and including them and the long line of political thinkers following them. The political has always been assimilated with the political rule, or with the collective decision-making of groups of people that have initially divergent interests, or the very space within which take place those disputes in a collective decision-making process, with the use of force categorically excluded.²⁹ The space in question, the space of the political, is therefore construed as one situated outside Man and within the State in its various historical forms, and the political itself *is* basically an exercise of authority within the collective in the name of the collective decision, in the name of the association. Almost all political thinkers before and after Socrates, Plato and Aristotle (the three included, of course) conceived of the political more or less under these terms, and this placed the political nature of man in an *ultima Thule*, presupposed but far away from man's Being in fact. Moreover, in languages like German or French there are not even different words for the obviously different meanings and functions of the political as it appears in English with the words *policy*, and *politics*. Romanian language makes the difference between these concepts in an almost blunt way: *policy* and *politics* become one in the Romanian word with feminine connotation 'politica' (the plural 'politici' is the translation of the plural meaning of *politics*), while the *political*, as the most abstract of these concepts and, the refore, incorporating the highest significances, becomes in Romanian the masculine 'political'. And all these modern translations derive, of course, from the ancient Greek word for city, *polis* and its derivations. Aristotle is generally considered the founder of the political philosophy. For Leo Strauss, "Aristotle is the founder of the political science because he

²⁹ For a definition see, for instance, the respective entry in *The Blackwell Encyclopaedia of Political Thought*, David Miller ed., Blackwell, 1991;

is the discoverer of moral virtue”, (Strauss, 1978: 27), but in contrast with the modern political science originating in the rationalism of the Enlightenment and perfectly illustrated in the principles of the United States Constitution. Indeed, Aristotle built his entire political philosophy around the concept of virtue, endowing the political with *telos* and proclaiming it oriented toward “some good”. He wrote in the very beginning of his *Politics* (1252a1),

“Since we see that every city is some sort of partnership, and that every partnership is constituted for the sake of some good (for everyone does everything for the sake of what is held to be good), it is clear that all partnerships aim at some good, and that all partnerships that is most authoritative of all and embraces all the others does so particularly, and aims at the most authoritative good of all. This is what is called the city or the political partnership.”³⁰

Indeed, Aristotle views the political as intimately related to moral virtue, to the concept of good as developed especially in *The Nicomachean Ethics*. The city is the fundamental political partnership that cannot and should not have any purpose or *telos* other than the pursuing of that essential good that moral virtue is. This was the rational end, the *rationale* of the political, in the view of the ancient Greek political philosophy. But what draws my attention even more here is the presence of the verb ‘see’ in such an important definition. It means that Aristotle understood a thing so important as the city as *given* reality. Its nature as political partnership is part of that given reality, and the fact that “everyone does everything for the sake of what is held to be good” as another given reality in which ‘good’ is what is *held* to be good and not the Good Plato was trying to define in the *Republic*. A very long line of scholars approached these particular views of Aristotle and his apparent superficiality. For this study the most important aspect is that in *Politics* the moral good is something expected to be fulfilled by and within the State as the only alternative humanity has over this issue. Hence, the subordination of the moral to the associational understood as containing the political within its space is perfectly rational from the viewpoint of the ancient thought that conceived of man, logically from

³⁰ The English version of this text can be found in Aristotle, *Politics*, translated and with an Introduction, Notes, and Glossary by Carnes Lord, The University of Chicago Press, 1985, p. 35;

the Aristotelian perspective, as an animal, a political one. Christianity was to do nothing else but to exalt this vision and offer its own view based, however, on the ancient tradition: man is by nature a sinner and therefore he must be disciplined by the rules imposed on the community within the context known now as the political.

Darwinism did even more harm to the understanding of humanity by adorning man's Aristotelian animalness with the aura of science. Therefore, the entire history of political thought developed around these ideas and not accidentally. They were part and characteristic of their own time. They were not good or wrong – they were simply needed for the maturation of man as a thinker of the political and a characteristic for the level of that maturation at that particular time. But History is itself a process of maturation. Unfortunately, the world is still in that state of numbness invoked by Heidegger. He felt the rotten seed had been placed long ago and very high in human thought, in the very understanding of Being. But the particular Being of Man was also defined in that age of archetypical definitions. Heidegger criticized the traditional understanding of man as *animal rationale* originating with the ancient philosophy on the grounds that it placed man and humanity forever in the realm of the Animal, an animal different from the others due only to his rationality³¹ and far from understanding his very humanity construed conceptually in the Roman Age as *humanitas*. However, let us have a look again at the famous Aristotelian fragment on the nature of man. He says in *Politics* (1252b25-1253a5) that,

“The partnership arising from [the union of] several villages that is complete is the city. It reaches a level of self-sufficiency, so to speak; and while coming into being for the sake of living, it exists for the sake of living well. Every city, therefore, exists by nature, if such also are the first partnerships. For the city is their end, and nature is an end: what each thing is – for example, a human being, a horse, or a household – when its coming into being is complete is, we assert, the nature of that thing. Again, that for the sake of which [a thing exists], or the end, is what is best; and self-sufficiency is an end and what is best. From these things

³¹ See especially Heidegger, 1993, p. 213-266;

it is evident, then, that the city belongs among the things that exist by nature, and that man is by nature a political animal.” (Aristotle, 1985: 36-37).

It is *because* man is political by nature that Aristotle views the one who is not part of the city as “either a beast or a god” a few lines later. Hence, as I have pointed out earlier, this interpretation left no room for the development of an alternative political thought, one in which thinking to simply think Being and not become an “-ism” facilitating in this way “the dictatorship of the public realm”. Man had no other choice but to be good fellow among others in the State and the State then took the liberty of deciding on what ‘good’ was to mean at various stages. Besides, Heidegger did not approve of the connection made between *humanitas* and *animalitas* and demonstrated, as shown already in a tabular form, that being a man has fundamentally nothing in common with being an animal. In my opinion, more influential throughout the history of human thought was the way in which Aristotle defined Man as naturally political, be it in the animal or human way. Aristotle placed all this *politicalness* within the space of the city and he viewed all partnerships as *ruled*, even the partnerships of gods having their own kings and (1252b25) “human beings assimilate not only the looks of the gods to themselves, but their ways of life as well.” (Aristotle, 1985: 36). It is, therefore, natural to be political, and to live within the city, and to be ruled within the city as a member of a naturally ruled society that is constituted as to pursue the moral good. The political is, therefore, something viewed by Aristotle as naturally given from *outside* to fit something naturally being *inside* man, his need for such a political.

2.2. THE INDIVIDUAL POLITICAL

As I have asserted above, this conception of the Political does not originate in Aristotle’s writings. Socrates, Plato and their forerunners formulated their political ideas within the limits of this conception. No wonder then that this concept survived in and shaped history up to now. What is the result of this? The analysis of the attitudes of the American and Romanian peoples toward the political shows a growing tension in two countries that are basically at two very different levels in the imagined axiology of political culture as emerged from the traditional political philosophy. This growing

tension is not singular either in space, or in time. History itself speaks in the language of a perpetual revolt against established orders. Cities grouped in or formed alliances that eventually turned into empires in various ways. Empires occupied the surface of the earth until quite recently when national revolutions took place and nation-states were established. Nation-states, in turn, are now more and more under pressures from within as posed by minority groups identifying themselves on grounds of language or various other interests, and nation-states prove eventually to be nothing else but heirs of empires in what concerns both their falsely 'political' organization and their practices. Moreover, nation-states suffer the pressures coming from the globalization process, or become willingly part of supranational unions, as it happens nowadays in Europe. Such an option leads inevitably to the dilution in the future of nation-states' own sources of legitimization. Some even argue that the discovery, production and use of weapons of mass destruction made the state virtually obsolete³². Nation-states are under the double pressure of the global and local forces. Romania is such a nation-state. The United States of America is a union of states constituted in a way totally different from the European ones, but in neither case does the verb *to be* mean that these two states *will always be* what they are now. Heidegger managed to incorporate 'change' and 'becoming' in the concept of Being and the scientific approach to society and the political should take this understanding into account. Within this context, I believe that the traditional and already decrepit interpretation of the political is the main cause of tension. Political philosophy must come to its senses and admit that it must become again and decisively political thought and think of the political as it *is* and not as it looks like. Understood as the space of collective decision-making or as leadership of public affairs and not as man's own nature, the political was the main cause of the unfolding of history as a perpetual revolt against regimes existing at all times; no matter how democratic or totalitarian political regimes have been behaving in History, they were the expression of the same type of regime as defined according to the traditional understanding of the political as presented above. I shall try to prove that a hopefully more profound understanding of the political in its pre-metaphysical meaning will implicitly lead to a fundamentally different

³² See, for instance, Hertz J., *The Nation-State And The Crisis Of World Politics*, McKay, New York, 1976;

understanding of History and of the place that our present States and we belong to within it.

My point is that in spite of being placed by most political thinkers ever within the public space, the Political can be found *exclusively* in the nature of the human Individual, in his human nature. What we denominate nowadays as 'political' is a misinterpretation. We give the name to something that actually is just a manifestation of the real thing; we call 'political' what actually is the manifestation of the real Political only when and if displayed in public life. Therefore, we talk big and at historical dimensions about something that is contingent in nature from the perspective of the public sphere and permanent only in the Individual. When it manifests itself, we call it participation in the outside. When it is not manifest, we blow the alarm shouting that that is alienation. But we do all this having in mind the political as the outside and do not see that at the outside of the Individual would be nothing else but a deserted space without the real political that makes it alive, the one in man. Moreover, we make judgment values of man's political performance employing as criterion the outside, the false political, and not the real thing. Feminist political thought suggests, for instance, that 'the personal is the political' but at the same time suggests that personal problems should become subject of public interest and action. Moreover, the understanding of the nature of the Political as such is not made clear while this interpretation, anyway, does nothing but places individuality and privacy even more under the yoke of the public opinion as a subject of it. The traditional (mis-)understanding of the Political as enriched up to now by almost all political philosophers has led, as I pointed out above, to dramatic consequences not only for the individual but for the understanding of History itself. The very persistence of error throughout History was caused by this erroneous perception. Aristotle asserted that Man is by nature a political animal. Does it also mean the Man's Being in the Heideggerian interpretation is the Political? I personally think it is so; man is not a political animal, but the Political as the only political. This could anyway be viewed as the most challenging question in the contemporary political thought and the only one that could determine it remain thought and not become philosophy. The definition of the Political is therefore essential as the definition of Man if we want a true analysis of culture from this perspective to become

possible. Moreover, it should also be kept in mind that the Individual can explain the State's Political, while the State cannot explain the Individual's Political.

First, I believe that in this world of 'global' approaches the so much invoked political relevance of the individual and its essentiality has been completely forgotten in spite of the multitude of techniques democracy has developed for making the *political* will of the citizen relevant. After thousands of years of historical upheavals, "it remains clear", in the words of Hendrik Spruyt, "that the principle of territorial sovereignty is now a constitutive feature of the modern state." (Spruyt, 2002: 134). People remain means for the achievement and maintaining the rule of the state over its own territory, supposedly for the benefit of the people, but here people are means in the first instance and purpose only in the second, a fact indicating that even the now old Kantian principle of morality is still encroached upon by the State itself with a historical reflex. States control what is now called 'the political' as a means of control over people themselves, understood as an amorphous mass, while the voices of the individuals that make possible that mass and that State are not heard; they are not presupposed as relevant in their very individuality. As in the case of Heidegger's fundamental questioning of Being in its *what* as opposed to the *how*, I propose the question about the Political as the question about man's Being, if for nothing else, at least because Aristotle called man *zoon politikon* and because the entire European and American political thought was built upon this assumption. I consider that answering the question of the Political would give the true and final understanding of man's very nature by recognizing an essential feature of his humanity and, therefore, coming closer to understanding his essentiality. Second, I maintain that history itself proves that the State, in its various historical forms (city-state, *imperium*, nation-state, supranational, democratic, aristocratic, oligarchic, totalitarian, etc.) has failed to satisfy the Political as I view it and passed, as a State political, through a history of continuous contestation; it faced continuous Revolt originating in the true Political. The actual or virtual collapse of those forms of State political proves they were and are not enduring entities. I believe that there is a profound connection between this systemic fragility and the political relevance of the Individual in the long run.

However, the traditional political thought is right in conceiving the State as associational in nature. As an association, the State is, indeed, the result of human

decision but I do not understand this associational according to, for instance, the social contract theory. Here, I also go beyond the traditional theory of association as established by Otto von Gierke in the nineteenth century. He had, however, a great intuition that was transmitted to an entire school of political theorists. He asserted that, "The state moves away from and above the people; whatever wishes to be recognized in public law can only continue to exist as a function of the state, while the *dependent corporations based on private law* – the characteristic type of association in this period – cannot revive their extinguished public significance. Absolute state and absolute individuality become the emblems of the age." (Gierke, 2002: 11). He saw the State as an associational institution above the others and the distance between them as crucial for the good working of the society as a whole. Gierke maintained that especially in the large states of the modern age, individuals could develop politically and, therefore, internalize the virtues of citizenship only in professional, civic, or other kind of associations. For Gierke, the association of people was in itself a moral value and state's duty was, therefore, to promote the associational and protect it. However, the German thinker did not mention a word about the true relevance of the individuals within the associational and, so, their political relevance was left where Hegel placed it, in line with the traditional political thought: individuals can become 'politically free' only within the state as the supreme space they belong to by nature. In my view, the fact that 'the State is associational by nature' means *only* that the State is not an *a priori* notion in relation to the humanity, that the State is *a posteriori* to humanity. Moreover, I view the State not as a primary product of creation, but as a secondary one, as a derivative product, since the State is not the Association in itself, but a particular manifestation of the associational and nothing more. The State, in this respect, is practically not a creation but an *emergence*. In the category of creations originating in the man's decisional capacity, i.e. primary associations as products of man's Decisional, I situate those such as the family, groups founded on friendship, professional groups, vocational groups, humanitarian, artistic, religious associations, etc. They and their likes are those 'human associations' which humans literally *create* and more or less *participate* within them on grounds of personal decision and with high expectations regarding the feed-back to be received within the respective associations as response to man's acts of creation and participation.

The need for all this rich variety of associations appeared in time, with the development of a more and more complex society. However, the reader should keep it in mind at this stage that they are primary associational products, while the State can be considered as a secondary product that emerged in history long after the first exercise of the Associational itself and as a result of it. The United States, for instance, were created not by the decision of each individual within the member states but by representatives of those states which were, in turn, created by the decision of various associational forms existing within them at the time of their creation. The same can be said about the Balkan or any other state. Romania as such was not created by each and every of the Romanians, but, at first, by the decision of the representatives of two Principalities (Wallachia and Moldova) and later by the unification act of 1918 with Transylvania. Those Principalities, in turn, were created by means of decisions from within (local interest groups) or from outside (neighboring empires) their territorial boundaries. However, there has never been held a universal referendum either in America or in Romania aiming at consulting each and every inhabitant of those geographical spaces on the establishment of the States they were supposed to live in. Still, those States *emerged* into Being as a result of human decisions, decisions of a few individuals. Even these two examples show that the Political of Individual man *antedates* the State since it is the creator of associational forms that can in turn decide on the creation of the State. All associational entities emerge therefore into Being due to two essential human capacities. They are the Political *capacitas* and the Associational *capacitas* and the confusion about them has led to the misunderstanding of both the nature of the Political and the meaning of History.

2. 2. 1. Political And Associational

The Political is exclusively Man's aptitude for taking decisions. Take voting for instance. In authoritarian or totalitarian states, individuals are non-relevant for the political system. In democracies, people vote when electing their representatives in the government of the state, that is, in the legislative body. In many countries people also elect the president of the republic whose role is more or less relevant in the respective states, sometimes the differences from one case to another being enormous. We call the

elected ones politicians because they decide over matters of state but we forget that the electorate decided in the first instance on which exactly those politicians would be. When electing them, voters chose out of some alternatives and by doing so they chose, practically, from alternative policies. It is perfectly true that both people from the electorate and the politicians they elect take supposedly advice from other people in what concerns their own decisions. However, they are the ultimate instances of decision and the only ones to take the responsibility of those decisions. Consultation over an issue should not be confused with the decision over that same issue. When Aristotle says that man is *zoon politikon*, a social or political animal, he establishes political science as a science of the man-in-society and not as the science of man. He places man's political nature, as we have seen, within a given space inhabited by a specific society with a specific, moral aim since it is 'constituted for the sake of some good.' Aristotle makes a big error here – he endows man with a fundamental characteristic but fails to grasp the fact that the respective characteristic, man's politicalness, is not something to belong, as construed by him, to man's being, but one to be evident only due to man's being-in-society. Only because 'we see' man is in society can we conceive of man as social and political, and not by man's nature; here, Aristotle contradicts himself and leads into error political thought. This is only the *how* about the Political of Man, or the Political in Man, and it is definitely not the *what* about it. And we remember that Aristotle starts by saying that 'we see' all these, which means that they are self-evident, exactly the self-evidence that Heidegger was posing against the very question about Being itself. While, as I asserted, the Political is exclusively Man's aptitude for taking decisions, the State remains obviously situated in the limited area of the Associational as the creation of the Political. It is, undoubtedly, an association of other associations itself.

All the primary products of Individual's Associational *capacitas* are at work within the State at a particular time, at their Time. I mean that the State, as an association intended to comprise of and protect all the associations within it, is not an eternal and an omniscient presence, but is and should always be understood as an instrument in the hands of its creators and must meet the aims and needs that led to its creation. Moreover, since the concepts of Becoming and Change are possible, as it was pointed out, with the Heideggerian approach to Being, the State also must be viewed as an entity that can be

recreated according to the condition of its own Being that is, according to the aims and needs of its creators as unfolded at their Time. They change and become new aims and needs as different from the ones at the moment of State's creation. Their Change and their Becoming are also manifestations of the Political but this is never reflected in the Associational except for times of Revolution, when the inertia of the Associational is forced to submit itself to the Political as the nature of Individual human. How does it actually happen? We shall understand it with the subsequent analysis of the Associational.

The Associational capacity – the capacity Individuals have for coming together and unite in this way their energies for the fulfillment of a specific aim that becomes therefore the aim in the name of which the association was created – is an expression of the Political capacity, as materialized in various forms of human associations. It is in an *a priori* position in relation to the Political as its own creation becoming itself an instrument of creation, with the goal of fulfilling the Political as Decisional. It is therefore supposed to be, if rational, intimately related to the Individual's need for that specific form of association at that time and that is what makes the Rationality of the Associational, the rationale of its Being. Tensions appear when this principle of rationality is no more satisfied, be it because of a change occurring within the already established and initially well-functioning form of association, or because, a new form of association being established, it simply does not satisfy the principle of rationality from the very beginning.

In the second of the two cases suggested here, the collapse of the respective form of association can be foreseen easily and deserves actually little consideration in our analysis. Early Socialist or Communist communities or international alliances that existed only on the paper are numerous in history and can illustrate very well this type of politically (*decisionally*) unsuccessful associational forms. The United Nations is most probably the unfortunate contemporary example of an association not meeting fully the purpose of its own being. In the case of an initially well-functioning form of association, tensions appear simply because the associational form tends to become self-sufficient and manifests as an Institution itself, while its constitutive principle, the Individual's aim when establishing that association, is no longer relevant. The State, be it pre-modern,

modern, or post-modern, is the best example here. The very Being of that association becomes self-evident and self-legitimizing. Aristotle understood in this way the State, and man as *zoon politikon* who, when outside the city-state, would be either a god or a beast. On the other hand, human needs change and become new, different needs, according to the new conditions within a complex and ever changing/becoming environment subject to the true definition of Being not as *capable* of eternity, but as Being-in-Time in Heideggerian terms. The very evolution of the State is the best example of such a becoming. Each revolution, from the ancient times to the Romanian revolution in 1989 and the fall of the Soviet empire one year later, is illustrative of the fact that various forms of politico-administrative organization did not satisfy the needs of the individuals in the sense that their capacity of transformation did not give hopes of substantial change. Had humans lived one thousand years, few would probably agree to put their lives in danger in revolutionary uprisings against bad regimes. It is what happens in the minds of each of us that makes us come together and pursue violently such aims. It is the decision taken by each individual that makes possible political change and only by taking into account our own individual interests, no matter how cruel this might sound to those defending thousands of years of philosophy of morals.

Essential here is to perceive and recognize the Associational *capacitas* as never altering or vanishing. There will always be alternatives and no end to their unfolding; what traditional political philosophy portrayed in various *époques* as the 'good regime' is a ridiculous idea unless understood as a possibility only within a specific context, at a specific stage in history. Had the 'good regime' *been possible* a practical desideratum, then the end of political history itself would have been possible; the possibility of change itself and especially as incorporated in Being by Heidegger makes the theories of the good regime from Plato to Fukuyama look like childish games. Since human needs change and man, in fulfilling those needs, encounters the resistance of regimes, he would always find alternatives in practice or in mind that would in turn determine him to associate with other fellows and adopt one of those alternatives to a regime becoming bad. Gierke suggested that, "Fellowship and lordship combine in the course of time; within the fellowship a lord emerges as a leader, while in the lordship a fellowship of subordinate emerges." (Gierke, 2002: 14). However, his majestic intuition did not go here

deeper into the very nature of the process. Had he done so, he would have found the source of the combination of fellowship and lordship in the Individual himself, in his never vanishing capacity to determine that succession in history by the very power he himself has to decide over this issue. In other words, it is at any time possible that a new form of association will be invented as to meet human Individual's needs at that time, provided that other Individuals agree also together with the One upon the necessity for those specific needs to be fulfilled. The Associational capacity makes therefore possible the recreation of the environment within which the Political is active and therefore grants the relevance in the long run of the Individual political, the true Political. The perennial character of the Associational capacity and its fundamentally contingent nature places constantly the Political where it naturally belongs to – at the origin of the associational process. Without its Associational capacity, the Individual does not cease to be the Political because it is in his nature as Man's Decisional. Man can *decide* to be associative and create an association today but not tomorrow, in one particular case but not in another particular case. His humanity rests in his very capacity of deciding over his being itself, even over the exercise of his own decisional capacity, his politicalness.

Many are those situations in which we chose not to take a decision, an attitude sometimes called prudence in the modern sense of the word and not as the English translation of *phronēsis*. However, the Associational must be accepted as the other natural capacity of Man that makes the Political possible in-the-World in Heideggerian terms. Man is Political by nature if and only if the Political is understood as the Decisional – the capacity of Man to take decisions – and implicitly as his capacity to choose between various alternatives. His Associational capacity is a totally different one from the Political simply because it is, like all other human capacities, in a position of inferiority to it – they are all exercised if man decides to do so; they are contingent upon the exercise of the Political in man and by man. However, the Associational is that fundamental capacity of man that makes his Political existent outside man, in the group and society. It is in this way that the society itself is made possible and the Individual takes with him his own nature in the society, with its two fundamental *capacitas*. Man is the Political by nature and becomes known to the world as the Political by virtue of his Associational capacity and at the time when he decides he needs to be known.

The longer is the distance between the true Political and what pretends to be the Political, i.e. the State, the greater is the possibility for revolt on behalf of the former against and the implicit collapse of the later in the long run. As I have mentioned above, the rationality of the association consists in meeting the principle of *political* rationality according to which its Being must meet the Individuals' needs as constitutive principles of the association, the rationale of its Being. That implies that the Associational is exclusively an emanation from the Political whatever forms it may take. Man decides not only to associate, but also on the way he wants to associate. It may be proper for me to insist here on the fact that I do not exclude from this scheme the influence of other Individuals over the Decisional of Man; far from me such a thought. On the contrary, I would rather suggest the fact that within the association man loses most of his capacity of discerning strictly according to his intimate needs and beliefs. My point is, however, that eventually it is the Individual to decide in any instance and the subsequent conformity of what he decided with 'what he should have decided', that is most probably 'what he should have known he had to decide', is the very essence of change in the political history traditionally understood. The State is in any case by its nature an association of associations, a derivative product of the process; it can be viewed as a creation only from the perspective of its constitutive parts, that is, the associations that participate in State's constitution. From the perspective of the Political *per se*, it is only an *emergence* something appearing, growing and therefore existing outside of his being, far from man as the Political. Since it is, like any form of association, a decisional factor itself, the State exercises that faculty by its nature.

However, since the State is organized and governed by living human individuals, it is inevitably their Political that takes eventually control of the decision-making process at the State level. In highly democratic states such as the United States, the consequences of this real state of facts are softened by the functioning of an efficient checks and balances system coupled with a more or less strict separation of powers together with other democratic mechanisms. However, as I have already pointed out, significant mass protests have occurred frequently even within the American democratic society against unpopular decisions of the federal or local government, not to mention the veritable crusade of the governed against the government in Romania and in the Balkans and the

rest of the developing countries. In my opinion, this is because the very understanding of the Political is misconstrued. Those individuals who are said to be working 'for the state' are individuals who did not work for the state all their lives. They were before citizens of the State, performing their functions as citizens, and those functions should be understood as nothing else but being, being Political. Humans cannot do anything outside of or without being and the State itself is made possible by the mere being of human individuals. Once they come to 'work for the state' or for any other institution, organization, or association, they cease to perform exclusively their original function of being; they must perform the functions ascribed to them within that system for the system itself to work. Their Political becomes circumscribed to the imagined political of the State mechanism and they do not take anymore 'political' decisions but implement or enforce decisions taken *by the State as an institution*. I say institution here because the same is true for any institution – that is their *raison d'être*. However, those functions are conceived of as indicated in the original idea that made the system possible. The communist police was oppressive in nature because the political system as imagined by Lenin was to be imposed to people since it presupposed fundamental changes in the social, economic, and political configuration of the society. The legislative bodies in democratic regimes perform their function, that is, legislate according to the fundamental principles of democracy such as the majority rule, the electiveness of the legislators, the freedom of opinion, speech, or religious freedom, rule of law, and the existence of a free market economy. Not accidentally we can find all these principles included in the Copenhagen political criteria for the accession of the candidate states (Romania, Turkey and Bulgaria included) in the European Union. However, the act of legislation in the name of these principles overcomes the mere act of being of those who, for instance, do not accept a market economy under the protection of a rapacious state such as a former communist one, or do not want to live in a country where the principles of democracy are so rigidly applied that, like in the case of the United States, specific private opinions come under the judgment of public opinion instantaneously. Or, for instance, ethnic minorities may feel totally uncomfortable with the situations in most democracies where, no matter how democratic the decision-making process is, decisions are always taken by Romanian, American, French, or Russian majorities. The same goes for political

minorities *per se*. The State's rationale of Being eventually comes to light, especially in times of crisis. The rationality of its very constitution is permanently under the critical eye of its creator, the true Political as the Being of the Individual, even when the Individual is not aware of that. The tension is therefore latent and erupts when no hope for redress is found. Mass protests, revolts, and revolutions are the mere expression of these dormant tensions between the State and the true Political. Subsequently, when States do not satisfy anymore the principle of political rationality as defined here, they cease to get the Individual's support for their very Being and are in the long run *changed* in government composition or even as such. There are various forms of opposition to political systems' inertia and one should not think only in terms of revolution and revolt since these are, as underscored here, only extreme and ultimate solutions. Think of migrations, dissidence, individual or public protests, plot and coup, alienation and refusal of support. All these lead to the vanishing of legitimization that regimes simply cannot survive without and history is mainly the story of a gradually vanishing legitimization of all regimes, of the Regime as such, no matter how democratic it was according to the principles mentioned above. When analyzing political culture as a set of attitudes toward political institutions, we might actually be analyzing people's growing discontent with what we, as scholars, blindly believe to be the best regime. Democracy may be the best equipped for this struggle between the individual and the State as confiscator of his Political since it offers the possibility of change, but other features of the contemporary democracy make it vulnerable in the long run, as we shall see here later.

2.3. POLITICAL AND RATIONAL

2.3.1. The Rationality Of The Political Within Associatio *n*

Now that we have an idea about what is rational in terms of the relation between the Political and the Associational, let us analyze the rationality of the Political itself, as the driving force of the two. Afterwards, we shall return to this point with a better understanding of my view of political rationality and the whole system will undoubtedly become much clearer. In the previous discussion, the Associational was considered

rational or not by judging it in reference to the Political. It is therefore a legitimate next step to try and define the rationality of the Political, i.e. the rationality of the decision-maker, the Individual himself, in his political nature. This time the invocation of a new reference point is needed and it is my opinion again that the reference point in this case cannot be but human need, usually indicated as a self-evident reality. My choice is to leave it as self-evident for now. That is because the word 'need' denominates something in human nature that escapes at this stage philosophical definition. I shall just characterize it as ever changing under ever changing rules, due to the ever changing environment in which the Individual's Being -in-Time emerges as Being-in-the-World. It may be said to be the very engine of man's Being since it implies man's movement from one point in thought, time or space to another as to fulfill that need. Since the approach to Rationality at the level of the Political presupposes a submersion in the intimate nature of Man as Individual and not as a member of an association, I think it would be fair to try and explain now my understanding of the Rational itself.

I call 'rational' whatever is generally intelligible, comprehensible, whatever makes a sense for me and can be explained to other individuals and can, therefore, by itself convince the others of its 'rationality'. Hence, the Rational is given birth within the Individual and reaches its fullness, that is, full Rationality, in the Multitude or Plural of the social by being accepted as such by the others as *legitimate* and therefore Rational. That is because the Rational is a notion of Being and is therefore possible only in language since, in Heideggerian terms, the home of Being is the language. Outside language, Being and Man as the Political would be impossible and the same goes for any notion of being, including the Rational: the cat be-comes in the house just because man calls in his language cat's being in that particular way. Something is then rational only in language because it would not be-come possible in any other way, and it be-comes rational from the irrational it could be because Man himself chooses this to be so. When Hegel and his followers mention our desire for recognition what they talk about is the aspiration for the recognition by the others of the validity of our own Political as our true Self, the one in which our entire individuality is expressed since it is *our fundamental capacity to decide on any matter*. My decision about my Being be-coming accepted by the Others makes the rationality of me-Political as me-in-association or me-among-

others. Without such an acceptance and rationality society would not be possible. The Rational Political appears therefore only within the Social, or within the Multitude, since I admit that not all Individual's needs can make sense and be accepted as such within the Associational. A cannibal would not be accepted in a non-cannibal community. However, I do not say that those needs vanish within the Associational and it is essential to understand this in correlation with the view explained here about the perennial potentiality of the Associational capacity in man. Those needs that are unaccepted within the association do not just vanish but remain in Individual's mind as possible alternatives since they were results of perfectly real contexts which can repeat at any time. The contingency of association in Man can give him enough power to pursue previously dormant needs that come back into actuality hundredfold when their time comes, and thousandfold when the Individual finds Others sharing the same view and ready to associate for the fulfillment of that need.

The process presupposed by the Political is exclusively a process of decision-making, as I have stated, in which the decision-maker is primarily the Individual. It is therefore the rationality of this particular process that comes under debate here. The decision taken must be, according to my definition of Rationality, comprehensible and must make sense to the one taking it, to the Individual. He is the one to make the first evaluation of his own decisions according, as it was agreed upon, to his needs. If it makes a sense to the Individual, the decision in question appears to be rational to him. The next step is the very coming of that decision, whatever its nature, into Being. Call it 'putting into practice' or 'putting it into public circulation', the decision comes eventually somehow into Being even if it is simply, for instance, in what concerns the opinion of Individual A about Individual B. Even in that unclear and extremely subjective situation, the decision in question comes into Being by determining an attitude of Individual A toward Individual B with more or less significant consequences. Whether the respective decision was a rational one or not from the perspective of the Others will be shown by the opinion of Individual B and other Individuals about it and their more or less active attitudes toward Individual A as a result of his decision. If it happens that the decision in question is related to the government of the association that Individual A is a member of,

be it a State or a non-State one, the consequences of that decision will most probably be more significant for both the Individual A and the Others.

Nevertheless, I call Politically rational that decision which is in accordance with the true need of the Individual taking it and which eventually meets its own original cause which is Individual's need. Self-recognition, accepted in the sense of the Hegelian desire for recognition, is satisfied only within the Political as understood here, and only by meeting the condition set above. Individual's needs are just what they are. The problem may not be defining them, but merely placing them in the right position among the manifestations of the Human and understanding the way in which needs become relevant for the Political/Decisional in Human. They *become* as such, they gain Political significance, when *emerging* within specific spaces of relevance. Those spaces can be private or public, in the various forms of public association and I agree here with those thinkers who consider that most of human needs cannot be fulfilled outside the space of the Associational and that this is the essence of the Associational itself. This is also shown by the fact that, in practical terms, the needs are materialized within associational entities no matter the number (more than one, however) of the ones who form them. As I have pointed out earlier, the more those needs are accepted and fulfilled within specific associational forms, the more acceptable those associational forms become for their individual members, or vice versa. When those needs become at a given moment irrelevant for the association as a whole, the Individuals as decision-makers are in the legitimate position of reevaluating the *rationality* of that particular association from their point of view and may feel less and less capable of accepting that state of facts and implicitly the membership in the respective form of association. This in turn can lead to a multitude of actions and reactions. All these events occur within the private or public space wrongly understood as political, while the real Political already happened with the *decision* on starting all this process itself.

At the same time, I view human needs as perfectly rational in all instances strictly from the perspective of the Individual since he, even in a state of mental incapacity, has needs that must be fulfilled from his viewpoint. Whether they are right' or 'wrong' is a totally different issue and it is decided upon practically not within the *nature* of man but within the large family of forms of the Associational as understood in this study. The

space of the association is also the space where the rationality of Individual's need is decided, but this time from the viewpoint of the Others in the association. However, it should be remembered that even cannibalism, for instance, is viewed as a common practice in communities of cannibals who take it as a rational behavior based on a rational need. And I do not know of any need or impulse that could be fulfilled outside the Associational in the sense of making possible the permanent isolation of the Individual from the Associational, and suggestive of Man's self-sufficiency, except man's need for exercising his Political nature. Only when he cannot decide over his being does he refuse the associational, that is, he refuses to choose between one or another and places himself in a sort of social suspension until he decides, again, to join a specific and therefore chosen association. We are in such a state of social suspension on many occasions in our lifetime but we are not aware of that. Think of the students before choosing a specific branch of study, or of the workers before joining a trade union, or of each of us before deciding to deposit money in a specific bank. On those occasions and for some time we are focused on those decisions and not on others. I call this state 'social suspension' simply because when being in that situation Man is in a temporarily uncertain relation with the Associational. One minute ago he was part of a specific number of associations and that was how his Associational was at that moment. Now, one minute later, he is about to make an important change in his associational status and add something new to it which presupposes a specific type of commitment, a new effort. He is in social suspension because his Associational is about to be redefined, with god knows what consequences upon himself. The specific forms of association we are about to join in those cases are in our attention and subject to our Political/Decisional capacity. From the perspective of our project at that particular moment we are in a state of social suspension just because we are not yet part of what we want to join. What do people think in such instances? They assess their advantages; they try to evaluate the chance for their needs to be fulfilled within those associations. Workers evaluate how their professional and social interests will be promoted; students try to imagine how that new branch of study will fit their professional or even financial needs; we all try to make sure, before depositing money in a bank, that our cash is secure or even increase in amount. We all take decisions over such issues and then we are so quickly ready to quit those associations that

trade unions, university departments, or banks are, just because our needs, the ones that made us take the decision to join those associations, are not fulfilled. People quit trade unions, careers, or withdraw their cash from banks and say 'I don't need that anymore'. Thank god we have all the time that capacity, the Associational, at hand. We thus know, as Political beings, that we can decide another time better and join another association, an 'ever better' one.

On the other hand, we should not forget that the word we use in all languages for 'need' means nothing else than what it means, that is, something indicating an insufficiency, a lackness of something, something that could not be achieved or fulfilled under existing conditions and it invokes the 'need' for a change in those conditions which cannot be done without some kind of help. The Need presupposes the Associational in itself, be it mentally or in real instance. It manipulates the Political that is its primary instrument and uses the Associational capacity to create its own space of manifestation. The Need is therefore not only the engine of Man's Being, but also what makes the association possible. Absolutely all thinkers seem to agree on that. From the point of view of the Need, the Political is its fundamental means. As a result of and by means of the Political in himself, the Individual manifests his attitude about everything and anything; he manifests his Policy toward each and every of the things that come into his view. The Associational makes possible the space of application for the decision as a product of the Political *capacitas* and, moreover, it can become means in itself but secondary, to be used by the primary instrument of the Need, the Political, in satisfying the Need. We see this happening every second of our lives. We can recognize the Political in us in every Decision we take and it is that Decisional which makes our political nature, be it when deciding upon eating a loaf of bread, or voting for one 'politician' or another. However, the most important issue here becomes not the Political itself but its *rationality*. Is it so because we still think here in line with the western tradition of thought that interpreted Man as potentially dangerous, as a *lupus* that only an Enlightenment type of Rationality could temper, or else? The reader is provoked here to judge this.

Rationality is one thing from the viewpoint of an Individual and becomes a different thing for another Individual or within an association of any kind and the

rationality on one Individual's need must be 'filtered' within the association's mechanisms of evaluation in order to make the association itself possible. This is perfectly normal since it is within the Associational that the Political becomes *subject* to the evaluation done by other Individuals within the association in theoretical debate or in practical interaction with their own Political, that is, with their own decisions over a specific issue. I also maintain that, in general, 'rational' is whatever is comprehensible and makes sense for the Individual and can be explained to other individuals and can therefore, by itself, convince the others of its 'rationality'. I also called Politically rational that decision which meets its original cause, and I found that cause to be Individual's need. This means we have an idea now about what is rational from the perspective of the Political but we still cannot see clearly whether the Political *per se* is rational.

3. 2. The Rationality of the Political Itself – The Concept Of Awareness

We have seen that the rationality of the Political as decision making over needs must be 'filtered' within the association in order to make the association possible. Now, how can we determine that the Political become mature enough as to be capable of 'filtering' itself and become, implicitly, worth of perpetual trust within the association? And, better said, how could the Political become so well functioning *in* the Individual as to make the rationality of both itself and the association meet at the same time, and the possibility of tension vanish? I am not trying here to find another childish recipe for the best regime. My belief is that there must be some sort of equilibrium behind the good performance of some forms of associations, be them political regimes or bowling clubs, that give an optimum of satisfaction to people and thus make them join them with enough enthusiasm as to make those associations last for some time. I am simply trying to grasp the nature of that equilibrium. Since I think it is impossible this time to choose a reference point from inside human nature deeper and more significant than human need itself, I believe that a better way would be an approach to the Irrational and the way it is possible. What else could there be to make rationality more evident than the opposite of it?

Moreover, no matter how wonderful the definition of Rationality sounds from the perspective of the Individual, I do not want to leave it like that and thus become the target of both liberal and socialist thinkers accusing me for endowing the Individual with powers that will lead inevitably to the possibility of destructive anarchism, or for resorting to some kind of decrepit theoretical offspring of modernism. Something is needed here for making social life possible within the association for such a rational Leviathan that my Individual seems to become as sketched here. That ‘something’ is in my view the additional *capacitas* in Man that makes his Being-in-the-World, or his Being-in-Associational possible by avoiding the clash between such an Individual and other Individuals similarly construed. After defining it we shall most probably be able to grasp easier what *irrationality* is and how it can be possible. The reader should notice before anything else that, after approaching up to now the Political and its relation to the Associational *per se*, our debate moves now closer to the relation between Individuals *within* the Associational. We approach now, therefore, the nature of inter-human relations when humans are conceived of as Politicals.

That *capacitas* we try to identify here is meant to somehow soften and *rationalize* the human strife for fulfilling needs and has been identified from the ancient times in various forms but construed wrongly. Aristotle called it ‘prudence’ (*phronēsis*) or practical wisdom and considered it as the highest form of virtue, or merely soundness of the mind.³³ This concept is related in the Aristotelian philosophy to moderation (*sōphrosynē*) and together they make the core of a theory addressed to what Leo Strauss indicates as a limited auditorium. He suggests that solid principles of action are based in Aristotle’s view on moral virtue and the good ends of noble and just action can be recognized only by the morally good man who is also capable of prudence “as the means to these ends.” Strauss goes on by asserting that, “The morally good man is the properly bred man, the well-bred man. Aristotle’s political science is addressed only to such men.” (Strauss, 1978: 25). Indeed, The Stagirite asserts that, “the prudent man in general will be

³³ For a full understanding of this concept, see Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, Wordsworth Classics, Hertfordshire, 1996, Book 6. 5, 8-13; Book 3. 10-12;

the man who is good at deliberating in general.”³⁴ However, a few lines later he also suggests that a young man could not have prudence since “prudence includes a knowledge of particular facts, and this is derived from experience, which a young man does not possess; for experience is the fruit of years.”³⁵ Strauss is therefore right in concluding that prudence as understood by Aristotle is suggestive enough of the fact that his political science and, implicitly, his understanding of the Political presuppose that not *all* Individuals are capable of it, but only those who reach a particular level of experience. Therefore, it can be said that Aristotle’s interpretation of Man’s politicalness attributes it as natural to the Man but, strange enough, conditions its ‘exercise’ by experience. This embarrassing situation can be passed over only when *zoon politikon* is translated as ‘social animal.’ His characterization of man as a political animal, that is, as political by his own nature, seems to have been taken too seriously by human thought after Aristotle. A closer look at this interpretation showed, in the analysis made earlier, that it leaves a huge possibility for the Political to be construed as *naturally* endowed with the contingency of evil, capable of endangering the various forms of human association by its own nature. No wonder than that political thought, fed also with the view of human’s relation to the evil as developed after Jesus Christ and the invention of Christian sense of morality, conceived of the Political as a space outside the Individual, meant to regulate his public actions in the society and protect him from his own innate evilness. Moreover, the practicality of *phronēsis* as stressed by Aristotle virtually made the Political be possible exclusively outside the Individual, in the public sphere of actions and, consequently, its rationality has been almost invariably understood as subject to public judgment in its entirety.

The practical nature of this *capacitas* we are trying to redefine here was even more stressed, on the eve of modernity, when Niccolò Machiavelli (1469-1527) made it clearer that there was a great difference between the real political and the abstract knowledge of the political (philosophical or so called scientific). For him, the real sense

³⁴ Deliberation here means merely choosing well between two or more alternatives in matters of politics. Politics is also understood as something taking place in the public realm. For a better understanding, see Aristotle, *op. cit.*, Book 6, 5;

³⁵ Ibid; Therefore, a syllogistic judgment would easily lead to the conclusion that only experience can make human beings eligible for political relevance. This, as I try to demonstrate in this paper, comes in obvious contradiction with the conception of ‘man’ as political by his/her own nature;

of politics was based little on abstract rules aspiring to the title of *absolute truths*, and more on what Machiavelli called *verità effettuale*, on “considerations of expediency, which uses all means, fair or foul, iron or poison, for achieving its ends – its being the aggrandizement of one’s country or fatherland – but also using the fatherland in the service of the self-aggrandizement of the politician or statesman or one’s party.” (Strauss, 1987: 297). In short, Machiavelli considered *fortuna* (transcendental and unpredictable force which influences decisively human actions and offers opportunities) and *virtù* (the statesman’s capacity to take advantage of *fortuna*’s gifts) as crucial for success in politics. (Machiavelli, 1960). Moreover, Machiavelli placed himself in the long line of thinkers of the Political who conceived of it, going blindly on the path opened by Aristotle, as a space outside the Individual within which the Individual only projects his latent politicalness and does so most of the times under the sign of evil due to Man’s potential capacity of doing wrong.

More than one century after Machiavelli, Thomas Hobbes conceived of the State as contractually established with a *telos* already different from the Aristotelian project. The Hobbessian state was meant to be the Sovereign entity protecting the society of subjects from threats from outside and inside the State at the same time, while the humans were considered in a relation of enmity to each other, widely known now as *homo homini lupus*. The Sovereign, in Hobbes’ understanding, is omniscient and irrefutable, and it is inclusive of both the political good and the means to achieve it. The state of nature is, definitely, unacceptable, (Hobbes, 1982: 227), and it is the political State, the Sovereign which is called to avert the increasing need of the citizens, fearing for themselves in such a harsh world, to protect themselves by their potentially dangerous “private strength”. Isaiah Berlin points out that, “all these rational egoists of Hobbes, Locke or Spinoza are arbitrary and unhistorical; if men had been as they are depicted by these thinkers, their history becomes unintelligible.” (Berlin, 1997: 103). It is true that some scholars are now closer to a more optimistic view of human nature than their predecessors.

Isaiah Berlin, for instance, views Machiavelli’s *Prince* as a satire (Berlin, 1997: 27), while others, like Leo Strauss, call for a deeper look into the past with a more optimistic attitude toward the political and the relation between the city and the man

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However, our current knowledge about the *capacitas* in question has been shaped, consequently, by this view of the Political as an occurrence in terms of power and within the space of the State. The Political is taken erroneously to mean something that already has a name: politics. The different interpretation of the Political as it is proposed here needs, therefore, the identification of a specific *capacitas* being already in the nature of Man as to make the Associational possible *per se*. The *capacitas* I am after makes possible the Associational *by nature* and has also a crucial role to play in the persistence of the Associational in its various forms in time, or in the collapse of those forms of association that do not conform to the principle of political rationality as construed here.

I believe that capacity to be nothing else but Awareness. Why did I not mention it from the beginning together with the other two? That is simply because it appears, as a necessity, in a secondary instance. It appears because it is *needed*. It is nothing else but a need and it is a potentiality in Man by nature. There are people that we cannot imagine even being capable of awareness at least over some specific issues but this is not what Awareness means here. That is awareness over specific issues at a specific time while I consider here Awareness as the capacity we have of being Aware as Humans of our Being as Humans, that is, of our Being as Politicals; on many occasions we are not even aware of such an Awareness. The interaction between one Individual and another presupposes the interaction between their individual interpretations of Being political – it is an interaction among a multitude of ‘Politicals’ or, better said, a multitude of ‘individual policies’ toward specific issues at specific times. Individual A is Political in one way; he takes decisions in his own way, while Individual B does so in a different way almost every time. When asserting this I mean that they may differ in what concerns the very decision they take over a specific issue, and they could very well differ in what concerns the mere readiness for taking a decision at a specific time, or in how fast they are able to reach the decision and so on. Here is, I fancy, the very essence of the *cultural difference* understood conceptually; *different cultures are basically different attitudes toward the Decisional*. These variances or others can easily lead to conflictual situations in which two or more Individuals come to clash over various decisions meant to be taken collectively and for the benefit of the respective association they form. Prudence (*phronēsis*) is achieved, in Aristotelian terms, with the accumulation of experience and

understood in English as practical wisdom. Prudence only capacitates in a way the Individual for taking the proper decisions, while nothing is there to guarantee that the Individual has the knowledge and is therefore *aware of all alternatives* he may have at hand at a given moment. Prudence is an attitude when and in taking decisions, not the awareness of man being in the respective process. As for the Machiavellian *virtù*, it needs little effort for anyone to see that it is the essential concept of a theory which presupposed eventually the emergence of two different ethics: one that was cultivating the political *telos* of human communities (pre-Machiavellian) and one that despises and neglects the political in us, after and with Machiavelli. (Berlin, 1972: 147-206). Such construed, the *capacitas* meant to control the Political cannot be but one to trivially serve a politician and not the Political *per se*.

Awareness *capacitas* is, therefore, that capacity potentially manifest in human nature and, implicitly, in each and every Individual, that leads to him being able to take decisions *lucidly*, to exercise his politicalness *lucidly*, to be Political in the most efficient way for himself while avoiding, at the same time, entering in a conflictual relation with the other Individuals within the association he is a member of by nature. Thus, he can make his Political viable in time. Awareness presupposes implicitly Man's unforgetfulness of the meaning of his own Being as Political. It also presupposes Man's unforgetfulness of his Associational capacity and its perennality as an alternative to the conflictual. Most important, as we shall see, Awareness must especially cover the very needs of the Individual in the sense that he must come to be 'aware' whether one or another need is really worth striving for and taking decisions in the name of it or not with the calculation of potential risks implied. Awareness as construed here has therefore an evaluative function and is inductive of knowledge of the self. In this sense, Awareness *is* awareness of the Political capacity in us as Individuals; Awareness *is* also awareness of the Associational capacity in us as Individuals; and, at the same time, Awareness *is* awareness of the Awareness capacity itself, as Man is naturally endowed with. It *is* also awareness of the Need in us, and awareness of Rationality or Irrationality. Probably most of all, Awareness *is* awareness of the fact that all these entities or capacities in us can change, that we Are-in-Time and we should therefore be aware of our nature as Politicals and of all our capacities and creations as contingent upon the Needs in us and the

Political we are. Its most important feature is that it is the least practiced capacity we have by nature and, therefore, it is in a state of latency in the sense that it is not always manifest in us. However, when the *need* for resorting to it appears, it awakes in us and then we say things like 'I have to be aware of this or that', or 'I have to know what is going on here in order to take an optimum decision.' It is when Awareness is dormant that Irrationality finds shelter in us and leads us to accepting situations that, had we been aware, we would not have accepted. Or, it can lead to us not accepting situations and later we regret doing so. Dormant Awareness of the Political in us determines us eventually act politically irrational by taking decisions against our own true needs that, at that time, we are not aware of. Dormant Awareness of our Associational capacity determines us forget about that very capacity and this transforms us into numb decisional/political actors who *accept* or *impose* specific situations within the associations we are part of without being aware of the real consequences of those specific situations. This is how we become irrational slaves or dictators, beasts or gods, and not by being necessarily in the state. We are Political before being in the State and this very Being of us makes the State possible. Dormant Awareness of our capacity of being aware leads to us becoming *forgetful* of our selves and to the loss of any chance to recovery until that dormant Awareness becomes aware at least of its own *withdrawal*. Irrationality is the non-conformity with our real Needs of what we *do* or what is *done* to us at a given moment in time and it is possible due to us not exercising the only capacity we have, Awareness, for preventing the occurrence of the Irrational. We as Political are therefore Rational as long as we are aware of this Awareness in us.

2.4. A DIFFERENT UNDERSTANDING OF HISTORY

We must underscore now the essential conclusions that can be drawn from our inquiry. First, we were not satisfied with the Aristotelian definition of man as *zoon politikon* and hopefully managed to demonstrate that man is political in his nature and not because of being by nature in the association or in the community. Second, man's politicalness was proved as contingent upon but not defined by the outside of man as

understood starting with the ancient philosophy; man is *political* in himself and not only as a member of the community. The State is just a secondary product of man's associational capacity and not the necessary space conditioning the exercise of man's politicalness. Third, the Political in man is rational if and only if conforming to man's own needs. Since the Association of such strong Individuals is a perpetual presence in history under various forms whose particular collapses are *only* particular and not altering the perenniality of the Associational *per se*, there must be something there that makes the association possible all the time. It follows then that the same Political that man is by his own nature and is rational to him must also be rational when placed within the association that man is by nature part of.

That rationality is satisfied by the conformity of the Individual's decisions with the evaluation of rationality done by the association as a sum of Individuals; Awareness is exactly that human capacity by virtue of which the Individual seems to stay unforgetful of himself as the Political (the One-who-decides), unforgetful of his true needs and the necessity that those needs be in accordance with other needs, that is, unforgetfulness of Other Politicals. Basically, this is how man *is*. Man's Being is political because he merely decides on whatever *is*. We remember the simple sentence about the cat. When man says, "the cat is in the house" that is itself a decision. Man could say, "the cat is next to the sofa", or "the cat is black", or "the cat is in the world" and all these sentences would not change the actual being of the cat, indeed. However, it is man who *decides* that the only thing he needs to say, that is, the only form of cat's being at that particular moment in time man is interested in knowing is that "the cat is in the house" and man is the one to witness that. Man *decides* even on his needs, in spite of thousands of years of philosophy in which man was said to be either at the hand of destiny (!?) or an earthly sinner unworthy of god's mercy exactly because of being considered the slave of his needs and too weak to resist them. He feels needs for various things but eventually man himself decides which of those needs is the one worth satisfying the most. Man is political by nature because otherwise he could not be, he would simply commit suicide considering how overwhelmed he feels anyway by the enormous information he has about himself and that he could not decide about. In Heidegger's vision, as it was pointed out here, man makes history because he cares about his future, because he does not know anything

about that future in spite of being perfectly aware that *there is a future* for him. Man is the shepherd of Being because he sees the cat and says what he decides to say about the cat and that is how the cat is; this is how man is the shepherd and, I would add here, the herald of Being, for Being is only in language indeed. It is man's politicalness that makes Being possible – otherwise, man could simply have the knowledge of Being but not be able to place particular beings and himself in the domain of Being. This would make the very notion of Man impossible.

This philosophical inquiry facilitates the construction of a new criterion to be employed in judging history itself. The fundamental characteristic of the criterion in question is that it changes the syntax of the sentence that History actually is. We see in the traditional historical thought a continuous succession of forms of state. However, at no stage in this traditional history can we see a break, a significantly long era when armies and parties literally take a break and enjoy the benefits of the good they do without resorting to killings and plots. Almost as a reflex we say, 'this could not be possible because they did not do good.' What does 'good' mean here and 'to who'? Let us answer the second part of the question first. The 'who' there cannot indicate anything else but the people. However, the sentence of History mentions the individuals that 'the people' is made of only when some extra-ordinary individuals become 'worth' of the sentence of history. We say then that those are heroes who, because of doing something extra-ordinary, became known as marking history. But should History not be understood as history of humanity, that is, of human beings, of individuals, and not of heroes? The ordinary are living individuals, too, and the sentence of history mentions them only as an amorphous mass under the name of 'the people' even in documents such as the modern democratic constitutions that we are so much proud of.

Let us see now what does that 'good' mean that the sentence of History makes such a big case of. Since antiquity, that 'good' was understood as 'the good end that the society must pursue.' Even the American constitution mentions it and does this in a surprisingly advanced way. We see there for the first time a word about individual happiness as incorporated in the 'good' that the State must be devoted to. Unfortunately, the contractualist nature of the American constitution and all democratic constitutions that followed it leave the Political where it has been wrongly placed by the ancient

philosophers, that is, in the public space. The political of man was recognized by philosophy only in that sentence of Aristotle saying that, “man is by nature a political”. By continuing with “animal” the ancient philosopher spoiled probably the most wonderful description of man and mislead human thought after that very sentence onward, to our contemporaneity, into becoming philosophy. Heidegger himself decried this unfortunate error Aristotle made when bringing together humanity and animalness. Moreover, when saying that the city “exists for the sake of [partnerships] living well” and that, “every partnership is constituted for the sake of some good”, Aristotle takes the power of deciding that what is “good” for man is placed in the public sphere, in the hands of the partnership of men. The meaning of the good itself is lost in the plurality of men and made subject to public evaluation in which the fundamental uniqueness of Man’s voice is lost in the crowds.

History as understood up to now is the sentence of a decision-making power taken away from the decision maker himself and placed in the impersonal public space. It has thus become subject of competition among the strong who will never cease to be a minority. Man as such lost his own capacity of being man, his only way of Being, with the confiscation of the Political by the public sphere. The Associational took control of the Political. The view proposed here suggests that the sentence of History must finally come to the stage when it is written the true way, with the subject being the Political and the object being the Associational that are both in the living creature man is, and not in the abstractness that the Association especially can be-come. Man needs to see and feel that the association he creates is responsive to what determined him to create that association: his very need for it. When the respective association ceases to meet the initial incentives for the establishment of that association, man reacts sooner or later as to modify its constitutive terms and its very configuration. He can feel free to say, ‘what is eventually the use of it?’ Associations that lost their contact with those incentives and the individuals who created them become simply institutions that are self-sufficient and need no more legitimization; they do not need anymore their members who, by forgetting of themselves as Politicals, become subjects of institutions. Only awakened awareness makes them remember they are creators of institutions and demand that, but this happens only when it is usually too late: revolt or revolution are the only ones to work as civic

actions at that stage against those leviathans that institutions become. History as understood by an immature human society is the sentence of such rebellion against misunderstanding. But history is also a process of growth and maturation. At the time Aristotle wrote his *Politics* human thought was not ripe and Awareness was not steeled by experience. Here, Aristotle was perfectly right. Experience is inductive of awareness. But not only an experienced elite is needed for the achievement of 'good' by society – our history of innumerable bloody wars is the proof of that. The entire world has to mature itself and reach the understanding of things as they are. That time of generalized awareness will undoubtedly come one day. Heidegger represents our immense step in that direction but the real, great step, will be made with the humanity becoming what Strauss conceived of as the universal democracy, one in which every human being on earth to be *aware* of his or her own *politicalness* and of his or her own *shepherdness* over Being. Without the understanding of the words of Heidegger I sincerely believe that such a profound transformation would not take place. Since I understand History as a process of maturation of human thought, any value judgment about past thinkers including Aristotle is not in my intention. Even the harshest critique present in these pages is not a value judgment but only a proposal of an alternative viewpoint I suggest to the reader. This alternative will find its expression in the perspective upon the American and Romanian history in the next, concluding chapter.

The possibility of political rationality as explained in section three of this chapter becomes crucial in understanding the particular historical developments and not only History as such. The only form of state constantly present throughout history is the city, from the ancient times until now. All the other forms can be viewed as extreme manifestations of the irrational political. What does this mean? The reader will surely remember that the rationality of the association, of any association, is given by its conformity with the needs that lead to the establishment of that association, the needs of the individuals deciding on the establishment of that association. Man must see and feel that his decision over his needs is appreciated and his Political recognized. Only active and permanently aware Individuals as the creators and perennial re-creators of the Association can make the association a good one since their participative attitude prevents the association from turning into a self-sufficient institution. When asserting this

I definitely do not mean the participative attitudes that Almond and Verba conceptualized in their theory. My idea of participation must be understood exclusively as cognitive participation, as the very Awareness of our own politicalness as defined here. The persistence of the city throughout history is indicative of the fact that it is probably the best form of administrative organization, capable of satisfying man's needs, capable of delivering the outputs man expects as a response to his inputs in the system. I confess here that it was this constant presence of the city in the sentence of history that made me take a look behind this amazing constancy and try to find its secret resources. The city seems to be politically rational according to the criteria exposed here and this impression becomes obvious when comparing the *time* of the city with the rapid vanishing of other forms of state. Empires lasted the longest but the smoke of the guns that killed them is long gone now. Nation-states appeared very recently in history and are already threatened from all sides. Fascism and Communism as ideologies lived their extremely short moments of glory and compromised even the concept of ideology. What was announced by Francis Fukuyama, in 1989, as the end of history with the final victory of liberal democracy over the other two ideologies mentioned above, was still a historical episode, taking place within the perimeter of ideology.

I think Man deserves a better picture of what the sentence of history is about and probably things would turn clearer if we just become aware of the very meaning of history. This meaning has to be conceived of exclusively as a function of what *meaning* is about. We must not forget the sense of the words we employ in research, in the sentences that help us understanding. Meaning is about language itself and here we are bound to come back one more time to Heidegger not in an attitude of worship but just because we want to be consistent with our entire approach here. Heidegger says that language is the home of Being. Could we interpret history as being anything else but the story of Man's Being? It would be hard to do otherwise. Even what I pose myself against here, that is, the traditional historical thought, conceives of itself as history of humanity in spite of limiting itself to the story of elites and heroes making history. Since History can be understood as the story of Man's Being, I propose, in line with the theoretical system developed here, the interpretation of this story as the sentence of Man's knowledge of himself. Once we demonstrated that Man is by his own nature political, that he *is* the

Political, History becomes the sentence of Man's knowledge of himself as the Political. This cognitive interpretation will be tested in the next chapter with a look at the recorded historical upheavals in the two countries under study here. Before that, however, let us sketch briefly how history actually could be construed from this perspective.

The sentence of History cannot start but with its subject, the word 'man'. We agreed here that man is political. History is about knowledge and therefore its sentence cannot be but an answer to the question about Man's Being. The question could be, 'does Man know he is the Political?' or, 'how much aware is he about his politicalness?' Only a brief look into the recorded history is suggestive of a few very simple answers to these questions. We can summarize these answers and thus divide History into stages of Man's cognition about his own Being. I propose here the following periodization: the age of Man as subject, the age of Man as citizen, and the age of the Man as the Political. Many may contest the originality of this periodization but my answer to them will be that I am not after originality but after a better understanding of myself as Man when doing what I do.

The three ages, or eras, or époques are not interpretations of history from the perspective of the space outside Man, from the perspective of the State. They are ages of Man's History – the sentence of his becoming in which his Becoming is his Being and he is finally the subject of his own sentence. I am sincerely proud of this Man particularly because I see him passing over the first two ages faster and faster all over the world. Thousands of years ago his Political was misinterpreted and since then he struggled continuously for what philosophers took from him, his innate politicalness, and deposited it in the hands of the State. Since man himself did that I am tempted to view that youth of him as youth and nothing else. The young are protected from themselves in all societies of all cultures on earth by the ones who can see the potential danger. It is probable that wise people such as Aristotle, or Hobbes, or the harshest of the Catholic ideologues understood that Man was not prepared for the knowledge of his own politicalness and decided it was wiser to place it in the hands of particular elites. However, those elites suffered a continuous process of enlargement in the subsequent age, culminating with Man becoming a citizen in a State less and less imperial and more and more 'democratic' and receptive to Man as part of it, as a citizen. This age started to become obvious most

probably with the French Revolution and especially with the Napoleonic episode. In spite of me being the one to develop this theory here, I consider the age of the Political as defined in these pages as starting, of course, with Heidegger. Only common sense made me not call it the Heideggerian age; such an understanding of the Political would not have been possible without Heidegger's understanding of Being and particularly his view of Man in relation to Being, and of Being as Becoming. Thus, after liberating himself from the misunderstanding of the Political, after shaking the yoke of the other humiliation represented by the religion, Man can finally look to the horizons of tomorrow. He can see there already, in spite of doing it still through some chosen ones in the representative democracy, the light of the knowledge about his own nature. History is therefore not the sentence of State's becoming, but the sentence of Man's becoming. It is the story of his maturation from no knowledge of himself as the Political and only as a subject to an imagined political, to him simply knowing he is the Political. Ideology becomes within this context a very significant element. Man as subject, before the French Revolution, could be governed without the legitimization effects of ideology. The fact that the king was stronger than his subjects no matter their ranks was enough to make the king the ruler over Man. And Man lived in this Thrasymachean world practically until the moment of the Enlightenment to which Man should be grateful until his disappearance no matter how much some would blame that époque for its inherent misunderstandings. From that moment on, regimes of all kinds needed ideologies as instruments of rule. This was the greatest compliment they could make to Man for him showing the fundamental capacity of becoming aware of what Man is, with the crucial effort of mass education undertaken at that time. Even in our times there are societies in which an ideology is still not needed for particular regimes to rule over those poor people. They lag behind and many decades would probably pass before they would eventually reach the level of the others, the people of ideology. However, they will finally reach that level one day, for Becoming is Man's Being, too. Only with this understanding of history could Man achieve that knowledge of himself as Being Becoming. Tolerance and universal peace will be possible only *after* Man achieves such knowledge, no matter the form of government he might choose to be part of. The essential thing about Man is that he must and undoubtedly will one day come to know of his true Being.

CHAPTER III. CONCLUSION – AN ALTERNATIVE UNDERSTANDING OF AMERICA

We have now at hand a few important instruments that can help us undertake an alternative approach to the meaning of history as Becoming in America. First, we have the Romanian mirror into which we shall look very soon. In that mirror we might see America itself in a light much different from the one in which it was placed up to now by the traditional *thought-of-America*. Second, we have now the *knowledge* of two crucial characteristics common to two political cultures very different in their background and from the historical perspective: attachment to democracy as value *per se*, and a growing distrust in political institutions and politicians. Third, we have at hand as an *alternative* to the traditional understanding of history a new criterion resulted from what I like to call a different thinking of the Political; a redefinition of this concept determined in the previous chapter a different understanding of history. With these instruments in hand, let us proceed with our inquiry into what was from the very beginning our task here: an alternative perspective on the American Becoming. Let us take a look at what we accepted here to be our mirror – Romania's Becoming. In this mirror we shall try and see the reflection of the American history under the angles of two major themes: nationalism and communism. Afterwards, we shall turn toward the conclusions drawn from the analysis of the political attitudes in the two countries and, by employing the criterion developed in Chapter II, we shall try to look at those political cultures from a different perspective. A word about the future will finally close our introspection.

3.1. HISTORICAL LANDMARKS AND THEMES

The meaning of being Romanian is not as grandiose as Romanians themselves would like to think. One reputed philologist demonstrated that the word 'romania' originates in the word 'românie'³⁶, a term which denominates Romanian language and appeared in the XVIIth century with a significant frequency of usage already in the XIXth century. (Arvinte, 1983: 128-129; 138-145) when the original sense changed as to mean the Romanian-speaking people as a whole. The country under this name resulted after the unification of the two Romanian Principalities, known also under the name of Moldova and Wallachia on January 24, 1859 with the election of one single prince as *domn* (ruling prince, from the Latin *dominus*) of Alexandru Ioan Cuza (Hitchins et al, 1998: 377) and at that time, it can be said, Romanians started building their *national identity*. However, in the Balkan context the concept of national identity took meanings one more bizarre than another. As one Greek points out, "although the nationalist writing of history is not a phenomenon peculiar to the Balkans, the insistence on the medieval if not ancient roots is more pronounced there than elsewhere." (Dimitrias, 2000: 44). The political community needed, of course, a source of legitimization and, with the fall of the empires dominating the geographical zone of the Balkans, that source of legitimization could be found nowhere else but in each of the national identities present in the region and this meant in turn a deep search for a glorious past as fabricated in history. The name of 'Romania' was not suggested by country's elites with the innocence we might imagine nowadays. Helene Ahrweiler, a famous French Byzantinologist, considers that the political upheavals in the region since the establishment of Eastern Roman Empire were marked with an interesting constancy by the political ideology of Byzantium within which she finds as central the idea of the universal empire. (Ahrweiler, 2002). According to the medieval understanding, each state had a specific rank in a universal hierarchy of nations in which Byzantium was situated at the top of this pyramid. (Ahrweiler, 2002: 45). After the fall of the Empire in the fifteenth century, its glory was to exalt the

³⁶ A famous opinion on this issue is given in Arvinte, Vasile, *Roman, romanesc, Romania. Studiu filologic*, (English: *Romanian, romanian, Romania*), Editura Stiintifica si Enciclopedica, Bucharest, 1983, p. 123-126. Turkish speaking people could pronounce very well the word if written 'romnie';

imagination of most of the military and political leaders in the region whose practically all attempts at domination over their own territories and expansion over others were done in the name of the universality of the Byzantine Empire they claimed to be restoring, against the Turk, all along the centuries of Ottoman domination, until the end of World War I. The political speech was therefore dominated by a theme foreign to the very people living in the region; its message was practically addressed to any other military or political rival who would pretend the same glory, at the same time. It should not be surprising that one of the names under which the Byzantine Empire was known to its inhabitants and even to its enemies was *Romania*; an appellation reminding of the Roman origins of capital city's authority. Hence, the name adopted for their country by the dwellers north from Danube was neither accidental nor innocent in spite of the true Latin origins of the Romanians as a nation, practically the only ones in the region that could claim such an illustrious ascendancy.

All Balkan history from 1453 (the official date known for the fall of Byzantium under the Ottomans) onward is merely about local military and political leaders trying to impose their domination over their people in the name of the revival of the old Byzantine glory. Consequently, as Barbara Jelavich suggested, the political loyalties in the Balkans were hardly oriented toward these leaders and there are strong reasons for us to believe that the people, who were mostly peasants, were much more emotionally oriented toward their families and the small universe of the regions where they lived. (Jelavich, 2000: I, 214). Since the leaders of the political entities established in the Balkans after the fall of the Byzantine Empire claimed in almost all cases the right to the crown of the deceased, the reputed Romanian historian Alexandru Madgearu seems right when asserting that one cannot talk of the emergence of national states at that early age in history. (Madgearu, 2001: 108). Language was only a premise of political establishment; rule was simply facilitated by a common language among the ruled and in the government. Therefore, even in those supposedly anti-imperial states the individual continued to be a subject of an impersonal government aspiring to imperial glory; the individual subjects did not even know in many cases who was the leader in the name of whom authority was imposed. Moreover, had the language been an important factor at that stage in the formation of the political states in the Balkans, the pan-Slavic movement directed from Moscow should

have been more successful than it only occasionally was. But how could people who could not trust their local leaders trust, on the other hand, an alternative coming from thousands of kilometers away? This heterogeneous picture of government-governed relations made the western Europeans look with despising eyes at the Balkans as the depository, like the Orient, of all negative characteristics of the society that Europeanism was since posed against. (Todorova, 2000: 294). This negative image was to mark, unfortunately, the east-west relations to this day.

In order to better understand this relation, let us see how Tocqueville described, for instance, despotism. He says that, "Despotism, which by its nature is suspicious, sees in the separation among men the surest guarantee of its continuance, and it usually makes every effort to keep them separate." (Tocqueville, 1981: 399). This was in general the view of the west but despotism was part of the definition of the political being of the Balkans as descending from the Oriental understanding of power. It resisted time because it was the only political language spoken by the local leaders. But a more profound explanation of this perpetuation in time is that despotism was not confronted with people's opposition to it, an aspect that can be said to define the West and was transported intact in America where the United States were build precisely in opposition to political despotism. Why was it so? The answer to this question is simple: because people in the west, Americans included, took political authority much more seriously than people in the Balkans. They did not experience the yoke of so many powerful empires to confiscate their capacity of deciding over their own businesses. The Balkan people, on the other hand, experienced, especially in the Middle Ages, a continuous process of regime change and rivalries between the central authorities in the Byzantine and Ottoman empires and their representatives in the Balkan provinces who, from time to time, challenged them successfully. The people, in a different situation than the westerners who could hope for change if revolting against the central authorities, found in the Balkans no strength to rely on among their leaders who could not pose much threat to the highly centralized imperial authorities. Hence, despotism was the only and unchallenged type of political authority in the Southeastern Europe.

An alternative for those people could have been, of course, the Orthodox Church. The western scholar that is unfamiliar with the Balkan realities would immediately

indicate that institution as a logical source of political stability and, why not, legitimization, in a region threatened by an empire of a different religion. In many instances it was the case but, at the same time, those westerners who became interested in the upheavals taking place in the peninsula discovered without big efforts what, for instance, Mark Mazower expresses bluntly: “The Church became notoriously corrupt as its highest offices were bought and sold through huge bribes to Ottoman officials.” (Mazower, 2001: 55). We can state then that even the space of the spiritual confession was practically confiscated by the state in its various forms. Even when the Orthodox Church found the power to revive and give a hand to the national revolutions against the Ottoman rule it encountered decisive reaction from the High Porte. The dramatic events during the Greek War of Independence are eloquent. As a reaction to the Greek uprising, Sultan Mahmud II turned toward Patriarch Gregorias in Istanbul making him responsible for not containing his community and eventually ordered his execution. In the words of Misha Glenny, “the killing of Gregorias was the start of a murderous purge of the Orthodox hierarchy in several parts of the Empire.” (Glenny, 2001: 28). Authority needed be restored and the traditional tolerance of the Ottomans toward other religions present throughout the Empire was to be forgotten for pragmatic reasons. However, this attitude facilitated the development of what historians usually call national conscience and the outburst of nationalistic movements in the nineteenth century.

Following the national revolutions of the nineteenth century, the Balkan nations gained their sovereignty not only versus the Ottoman Empire, but also against the Habsburg and Russian Empires. “Russia”, for instance, “saw wheat cultivation in Romania as a threat to its own harvests in southern Russia, much of it sold on to Britain and France” (Glenny, 2001: 61) and was at times active in the region in the name of the pan-Slav idea. The Habsburg Empire, on the other hand, dominated for hundreds of years over the Transylvanian lands of Romania and much of the northeastern part of the Peninsula. Life in the region simply could not be imagined outside the authority of an emperor or the sultan. The source of legitimization for the emerging national governments was looked for, as already pointed out here, in their own history. When that history contained few relevant things, the local elites did not hesitate to invent historiography and manufacture the national legends that formed from that moment on

the national mythology we shall discuss in the next section here. The result of such a process was what is now called the tyranny of history. A reputed Greek scholar points out, for instance, that the tyranny exerted by history over the Balkan peoples was harsher even than the tyranny of geography. (Prevlakis, 2001: 41). Since the peninsula was shared by civilization and barbarism for most of its history, as situated on the borderlines between the ancient Greek world and the Unknown and later between the Byzantine and Western culture or between the Muslim Ottomans and the Christian West, it is no surprise that geographical borders counted little. The massive movements of populations, due to forced deportations or as withdrawals in more secure areas when the dangers of war appeared imminent, made borders meaningless and religious affiliation or simple non-participation in the public sphere became the only forms of political expression. In an area dominated by impersonal imperial authority and by unreliable local leaders, many of who were foreigners or of foreign origins, people could do nothing but to develop their own networks of trust, limited to the small circles of the family ties or little outside them, stretching not beyond the limits of their own villages. The Balkan people live since the Middle Ages in history and that history was politicized and turned into an instrument of legitimization for their national governments. Barbara Jelavich, for instance, stresses the fact that the Balkan conception of nationality was based on three fundamental factors: common language, common history, and common religion. (Jelavich, 2000: I, 167). No political constitutive principle can be found among these factors. By contrast, the people in the West, including the Americans, live and build their history in Principle. In this way, history could never be politicized because principles are not the result of prefabricated stories of heroic nations, but the result of thousands of years of keen philosophical inquiry. Very early in their history the westerners could start becoming *citizens* of their countries at a time when, in the Balkans, villages were still robed by their own masters.

Martin Lipset pointed out that, “The absence of a feudal past, with a concomitant emphasis on equality of manners and of opportunity, has played a major role in differentiating American behavior from that of other nations.” (Lipset, 1979: 130). Practically, America emerged in history precisely against an Old Europe still trying to cope with its past and lagging behind in a process of political becoming in which subjects

turned themselves or were turned into citizens much faster on the other side of the Atlantic. That process started more decisively than anywhere on earth in America and it was at that moment, in the aftermath of the American Revolution, that America's superiority in terms of political culture was announced. Moreover, as in the words of Ray Allen Billington, "while the [American] pioneers were applying the principle of association in their daily lives, they were developing the philosophy of individualism in its peculiarly American sense. This held that property rights were immune from governmental or public control." (Billington, 1983: 87). Americans lived, at least in the beginning of their adventure in history, in communities outside the control of a strongly centralized government. Unlike the Balkan people, their small communities never fell under the yoke of imperial rule and when the British crown started giving signs of excessive authority they shook almost immediately that domination and resorted to their colonial identity as to create sources of legitimization. Property was no subject of negotiation in the American colonies and non-existent as a concept in hundreds of years of Balkan history but only for an elite of very, very few.

Bellah understood that, "Modern individualism emerged out of the struggle against monarchical and aristocratic authority that seemed arbitrary and oppressive to citizens prepared to assert the right to govern themselves." He goes further as to assert the enormous importance of the religious upheavals for such behavioral and political developments: "In that struggle, political philosophy and biblical religion were important cultural resources. Classical republicanism evoked an image of the active citizen contributing to the public good and Reformation Christianity, in both Puritan and sectarian forms, inspired a notion of government based on the voluntary participation of individuals. Yet both these traditions placed individual autonomy in a context of moral and religious obligation that in some contexts justified obedience as well as freedom." (Bellah, 1986: 142). This dubious state of Man as man led us with every day passing to the deep misunderstanding of our own very humanity but only in this way it was possible the maturation of the American man and the establishment of that democracy which now exports the values of its own liberal democracy. Max Weber pointed long before others at the way the Founding Fathers of the United States viewed religion, in total contrast with the submissive attitude of the Balkan peasant. He reminds us of Benjamin Franklin's

Calvinistic intellectual roots whose father often quoted from the Bible verses like that running, “Seest thou a man diligent in his business. He shall stand before kings.” (Prov. xxi. 29)³⁷

One could better understand these aspects if one looks at the role of the religious class in the Balkan societies for centuries under the Ottoman Empire. Barbara Jelavich, for instance, underscores the fact that within that context the Orthodox Church had major political responsibilities in the sense that it kept those communities of Christians united and able, eventually, to satisfy a very demanding system of tributes and taxes that the empire put in place for the financing of the enormous bureaucracy in Istanbul. (Jelavich, 2000: I, 215). Even the church was to vest its authority in a process meant to satisfy the political outside man and not his more or less relevant aspirations. The Balkan individual was irrelevant for the political/decisional sphere within the empire, but crucial for its financial situation – this is typical for what I called in the previous chapter the *subject age* of man’s history still experienced in the Balkans at a time when the American individual was about to become the grammatical subject in the sentences of a major constitutional document, even if still in the form of *people*. The essential fact here is that individualism was about to become a public idea in the United States even before their establishment.

When the process of political emancipation seemed to have reached a normal tempo in the Balkans, too, after World War I, another threat appeared from the northeast: Soviet Communism. This was to be the greatest blow given to individualism ever. In the aftermath of World War II it was already clear that Soviet Russia was to play a major role in the history of the region. At the same time, it became clear that the United States were to be the leader of the other side of an ideological struggle that took the name of Cold War during which the Balkan people were to experience a competition new to them – for the first time in the history of the region, ideology was to become a major issue. If the experience of the communist yoke was in any way beneficial to the Romanians, Bulgarians, Yugoslavs, or Albanians, it was probably in the sense that it brought them face to face with an ideology which, in spite of losing in the end the battle with the west, managed to turn those people from subjects into citizens, into people of ideology, a

³⁷ The information has been taken from Weber, Max, *The Protestant Ethic And The Spirit Of Capitalism*, Routledge Classics, New York, 2001, p. 19;

process that took place along many centuries of gradual upheavals. I consider that there are two main themes to be accounted for as crucial for the approach in this study. They are nationalism and communism. Up to now we could see that they define Balkan history; building national identities is almost fundamental for Balkan identities, it is their essence. Communism came as the new empire, one of an original type, to impose its own 'peace' in the region – Pax Comunista followed therefore Pax Romana, Pax Byzantina, and Pax Ottomana. It represented, as pointed out here, a significant step forward in the formation of a political culture, be it even communist or socialist, in a region where up to that moment individuals were subjects to constantly changing regimes. The World War II was followed, therefore, by half a century of peace that took ironically the name of the Cold War due to the competition between the two superpowers. It is also the first time in history that the United States of America come to mean something in the region and the Cold War was actually the competition between the liberal democracy of western tradition and the communist ideology founded in the west but rapidly exported and put at work in the east. At the end of this period liberal democracy was to be victorious and able to export to the east its best: its image as a perfect economic, political, and military model. The concepts of civil society and civic culture were to be waved in front of the easterners as guarantors of a successful transition to democracy. What followed was already suggested in this paper. What actually happens now, thirteen years after the collapse of the communist empire, is still to be understood. Let us analyze now the two main factors that influenced the political culture of the Balkan people in general, and the Romanians in particular, during the period before the contact with the liberal democracy of the west was possible.

3.1.1. Central Themes – Nationalism And Communism

Nationalism is still a central theme in the Balkan political speech. The nation state in the form that we are familiarized with is not very old as an entity and as a concept. An overwhelming majority of scholars have agreed upon the fact that nation states emerged as a massive historical upheaval in Europe starting with the fall of the multinational empires and as a reaction to the imperial oppression against the various member nations

under their reign. Moreover, many new nation states continued to be established after the fall of the Iron Curtain on the territory of the former USSR and elsewhere. Nowadays, most people find themselves born into a political structure that could be characterized more or less as a nation state. Within the nation state however, in contrast to the ideal notions deriving from social contractualism, the citizen is not given the option of participating in the making of that social contract, in the making of the state respectively. Any founding moment for the governmental structure present today in the world is located somewhere back, in a more or less remote past. It is a certain fact that almost all *states* have long legitimized themselves through a historical interpretation of revolution, civil war, ideas of constitution.

The traditional story of state's legitimization is, for the citizen, never in question. But the very being of the state as such was questioned on some important dates in history and the most important was the very episode that led to the emergence of the nation state itself. It is widely known that in the eighteenth and throughout the nineteenth centuries a radical challenge appeared to the *legitimacy* of the governmental structures. The decline of the previous sources of legitimization, divine right and other legitimizing concepts of the political rhetoric in the feudalism, left room for the rise of a new type of legitimization based on what people saw as closer to their views at that time – language as the first prerequisite for the good working of a political system. Enlightenment gave a lethal blow to the conception of authority based on the divine right as professed by despotic rulers. American colonists overthrew the English (economic mainly) yoke. The French Revolution and the Napoleonian wars shook the very political foundations of Europe by spreading the ideas originating in the Enlightenment movement. That is how the nineteenth century was marked by the search for a new form of legitimization for state authority. Anarchy itself was no longer accepted as a legitimizing factor in spite of being waved for a long time in the air as the only solution against the oppressive empires. Nations demanded more and more political rights and, therefore, the move toward the massive establishment of nation states was a natural development. Nationalism meant, at that time, the very essence of that process, and its synonymy with patriotism was obvious.

Jürgen Habermas made reputed analyses of the European re-conception of political power and legitimization following the nationalist movements originating ideologically in the Enlightenment. Throughout his work, Habermas identifies two stages of political development. He draws attention to types of discourse and to the change in that discourse on the passage from feudalism to a world system more and more dominated by the bourgeois spirit as inseparable from the rise of nationalism with patriotic connotations. In *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere* (Habermas, 1989), he describes the rise and fall of what he calls the bourgeois public sphere, a communicative structure that facilitated discussion and engendered public opinion. This public sphere arose, as we saw, as a foundation of the new European democracies. The Aristotelian directions, forgotten for almost two millennia in the shadow of the empire were put again into light and employed in the grand project meant to take authority from the hands of emperors or kings and place it in the public marked, subject of 'political' competition between various factions. The 'public sphere' established itself as a non-governmental ground for the formation of opinion on the basis of elevated and free discourse which incorporated the first conceptions of a democratic state with *citizens*, in spite of limiting at first the access to the full political rights derived from citizenship to the educated bourgeois class. (Ingram, 1987: 4-5; 149-150).

It is generally accepted that Germany was one of the most important springs of nationalism in Europe. Scholars of various backgrounds agree that Hegelian idealism, with its philosophy of history, exerted a strong influence on the German writing of history. History directed by philosophy managed to place the state as such, and especially with its national coating, above the imperial idea at the axiological top of political values. Hegel argued in his *Philosophy of History* that the historical process was rational in itself and that the state was the political entity that represented the physical embodiment of this rational process. The state is rational by nature. (Hegel, 1956: 9). This philosophical speech could not pass unnoticed by the elites contemporary with Hegel. The discourse of bourgeoisie incorporated therefore the concept of state as rational in itself and worth any sacrifice. Moreover, the historicity of nations began to preoccupy more and more the scholars of the time. As Levy put it, "vested with legitimacy imparted by expertise, historians are important players who help shape collective identity by connecting past and

present, providing continuities and a memory repertoire upon which the national collectivity may draw to define itself.” (Levy, 1999: 51-52). This must have been exactly what happened since nation states tended and still tend to define themselves not in political terms but in historical terms; that is, the political sphere is reduced to the space of action while, in justifying their very being, states have not done it with the political arguments derived from their real actions, but with arguments deriving from their more or less exact history.³⁸ Many nation states were created at the same time with the building of national consciousness, as in the case of Italy and Germany. (Lowenthal, 1998: 60-68). With some differences the process went similar paths in Eastern Europe, too. Nicolae Manolescu, one of the leading voices of the Romanian cultural elite asserted not a long time ago that one of the main causes of nationalism in Romania is the mere curiosity of the young people regarding the past viewed as glorious when compared with a present ravaged by economic and political crises.³⁹

The meaning of nationalism has not changed over the last century. The regions where it was active in establishing nation states, however, have changed dramatically and now we have at least one hundred years old states in the Balkans, for instance. The persistence of nationalism in its incipient forms in such areas represents a major destabilizing factor for those societies. Michael Billig sees a difference between what is called the banal nationalism specific to the West and the dangerous manifestations of nationalism elsewhere in the world. He suggests that, “in the established nations, there is a continual ‘flagging’, or reminding, of nationhood. The established nations are those states that have confidence in their own continuity, and that, particularly, are part of what is conventionally described as ‘the West’. The political leaders of such nations – whether France, the USA, the United Kingdom or New Zealand – are not typically termed ‘nationalists’. However [...], nationhood provides a continual background for their political discourses, for cultural products, and even for the structuring of newspapers. In so many little ways, the citizenry are daily reminded of their national place in a world of

³⁸ It will be probably never seen or heard of a case in which a state, any state, declares through its representatives that it exists *because* it performs a particular function for its subjects. What if it temporarily ceases to do so one day? That would leave the state in question without its legitimizing principle. This is why the state will always justify its *existence* in historical terms, by asserting its historical right to being, by invoking its historical gains and development;

³⁹ This opinion is extracted from Manolescu, Nicolae, “Despre nationalisme” (English: “On Nationalisms”), in *Cuvantul*, Year VIII (XIII) Nr. 4 (300);

nations. However, this reminding is so familiar, so continual, that it is not consciously registered as reminding. The metonymic image of banal nationalism is not a flag which is being consciously waved with fervent passion; it is the flag hanging unnoticed on the public building.” (Billig, 1995: 8). Indeed, nationalism is a living concept in, as suggested above, some countries in the Balkans. There, because of various reasons, nationality is part of the political speech as intense as ever, partly as a means of national identification within the very complex mosaic of ethnicities in the region, but mainly, and because of the first alternative, as a valuable capital for the politicians seeking power in those countries. In the West, this awareness faded away after a long historical process at the end of which the states there were determined more and more, within the space of an elevated political discourse, as Habermas would put it, to rationalize their functions and serve their citizens without invoking the national principle as legitimizing state actions. It is a change predicted not only by Habermas but also by most of the illustrious political thinkers of the West, starting with Socrates, Aristotle, and Plato, and ending with Hegel, Heidegger, or even Leo Strauss. The very essence of their political thought is a pleading for the enhancement of people’s education as a crucial stage toward the final emergence of a truly well established political regime. As Calhoun suggested, “if nationalism is a central problem of post-communist transitions, this is because it is a central [and the only] way of organizing collective identity throughout the modern world.” (Calhoun, 1994: 305). The knowledge of that identity is professed in schools and there is the space where a change should take place, in the sphere of education.

The modern world simply does not know of any other way of organizing itself politically, no other principle to serve as its standard. The effort took for the establishment of the nation states was so intense that its own mythology appeared as a natural emanation and this led to a specific interpretation of both the political and the historical aspects of human society. Calhoun agrees with this view when asserting that, “the rise of the modern state involved remarkable administrative integration of previously quasi-autonomous regions and localities.” (Calhoun, 1994: 317). Large masses of land had to unite under a common language and learn to conceive themselves as part of a specific supra-regional group. Nowadays, the challenge to this supra-regional political entity that the state is comes from various directions but probably the most significant

and all encompassing is the temptation for the supra-national. After decades in which the United Nations failed to provide for a viable international dialogue and to lead the international community to the age of a Kantian perpetual peace, the European Union seems to be a more or less successful experiment. Be it a spill over process or not, the European integration is a fact of our days to be taken into account when dealing with such a hard subject as nation state and nationalism are reputed to be.

However, this integration is deemed as an integration of already established national cultures into a supranational conscience, while most intellectuals throughout Europe of today agree upon the fact that the nineteenth century did not discover national cultures; that they had to be created at that time. Understood in this way, the integration process might prove to be much more difficult than expected. Eugene Weber, in his work *Peasants into Frenchmen* (Weber, E., 1976), describes how it was not until World War I that a western nation-state like France was able to achieve as a government a 'national' authority widely accepted among the French citizens. In the rural regions of France there had to be implemented complex programs of mass education to bring about the spread of a perception of that central authority. All these efforts could not have been successful without strong ideas legitimizing them, without the support given by written history with its examples of heroism and devotion to the national idea. This is why, as Peter Burke describes, the nineteenth century was "an age of a search for national traditions, in which national monuments were constructed and national rituals (like Bastille Day) devised, while national history was given a more important place in European schools than ever before or since." (Burke, 1997: 55). It is also true that after the employment of the 'national idea' in the establishment of nation states in Europe, the same idea was then at work in justifying the expansionist foreign policies of some of the same states. The invoked superiority of their values implied the placing of African or Oriental cultures on a lower level on an imaginary scale of values and facilitated those policies termed as imperialist just a few years after empires collapsed with the World War I. The rush for new colonial acquisitions or for the redistribution of the old ones started and this led eventually to the outburst of the second world conflagration. Joyce Appleby, recent president of the American Historical Association, suggested quite bluntly that, "initially tied to the concept of civilization, history glided like a tango dancer into the service of

Western nations as they began their ascent to world power.” (Appleby, 1998: 10). We see here another trend of German theoretical origin. It was Leopold von Ranke and his followers who conceived of the state, the nation state, as an entity among others, as competing in a Hobbesian world with other nation states while foreign affairs and the state politics were the very and the only subject matter of history. (Iggers, 1997: 30). When Abbot, as we could see in the chapter dedicated to the political culture analysis, warned about the lack political debate in America at a time when the American government was too busy with its international agenda, what actually happened could have been exactly this: the accession of the United States to world power, correlated with the economic development following the victory in the World War II, led to the incipient phase of the long process of a world identity formation in which people became citizens of a state legitimizing itself more on the grounds of its successes and less and less on the grounds of its true performance as an administrator of the American society. The subsequent decline of support for the political class as shown in Chapter I could therefore be explained in these terms.

Nowadays, scholars can point out that there is a wide range of challenges to the position of the nation state as a fundamental category of political thought. The ways in which cultures develop and the political discourse have changed and at least two trends are identified in this process: the rise of what we call global⁴⁰ economy with an increasing development of international economic markets, and the impact of the new means of communication leading to the slowly but surely receding of the cultural borders across the world. The Internet and similar communication advances have, indeed, the potential to make national cultural identities difficult to maintain. These trends seem now to provide a serious argument for the de-legitimization of the cultural bonds that have made the establishment and perpetuation of nation states. The main of these arguments is that a homogenous national culture cannot be maintained anymore in the modern world in which nation states remain only as reminders of their predecessors, the empires, since no ethnically homogenous nation state can be found in the world. Moreover, the challenge to the nation state comes from its very inside. I shall not analyze here the rich

⁴⁰ The term globalization was first used in 1986 and was spawned by the investment surge of the second half of the decade which involved all the leading countries of the OECD and not, as in the earlier postwar period, just the US;

literature dedicated to this subject but I shall still point out that most of the civic or political movements and organizations aim at promoting or protecting rights or other elements of social, civic, or political capital, and that in their efforts these movements or organizations find invariably a tough adversary in the nation states that the world is made of at this historical stage. Feminist thought, for instance, contests the very nature of the state as a man's world. Carol Moore published a manifesto in the *Liberty Magazine*, in which she states that, "Patriarchy and patriotism — both from the same root word, *pater* (father) — are simply two sides of the same authoritarian coin. Patriarchy is the ideology that males should rule. Patriotism is the worship of male-dominated states. Males have created — and still create — political culture worldwide, so it's no surprise that male values, needs and ambitions dominate." (Moore, 1991).

However, the most serious questions about the nation state's legitimacy in our contemporary world come from political thinkers themselves. The Hegelian assertion that the state is rational by nature was confronted by history as construed up to now with numerous cases in which that rationality proved to be a shaking concept. Fascism and Communism are only two examples illustrative of this opinion. In the name of the principles that these ideologies were based on, the nation states behind them promoted political values viewed as inherent to the respective national mythologies, the German and Russian respectively. The pure German race was the objective and *raison d'être* of the Nazi rule in Germany. In Communist Russia, the spirit of the traditional Russian peasant coupled with the Hegelian-Marxist revolutionary stance of the Russian worker as portrayed by the Communist propaganda made the essence of that political system. The traumatic events of the First and the Second World Wars lead Europe, after hearing the alarm of nihilism, to a more mature age when European politicians from its constituting nation states could conceive of unification and supra-nationality as possible solutions for the pacification of the Old Continent. It is also in this age of maturity that political thinkers could approach the theme of the state from perspectives that at other times would have been unimaginable.

The nation state that only a few decades before would be still on the pedestal as sacred relic was to be defined in the nineties as something we simply imagine it exists. Benedict Anderson suggested that, "In an anthropological spirit, then, I propose the

following definition of the nation: it is an imagined political community - and imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign.” (Anderson, 1991: 5). Add to this the new challenges posed by the globalization according to which the concept of the state is elevated from the palpable level of the nation state and projected into what is called the *virtual country* (Rosencrance, 1996: 45-61) and it seems then very likely that what our forerunners did for a few generations ago will no more be relevant for the generations to come. Even the U.S. citizens experience this shift in the perception of the state. To the many suggestions made by Robert Putnam to explain the decline of the Americans’ civic engagement, let me underline the following aspect: a recent estimate for the U.S. suggests that 80% of earnings for goods and services sold abroad are linked to the activities of American multinationals and not to the *national* businesses.⁴¹ The economic factors aside, the very structure and geography of the nation states come now more and more under discussion among scholars who try to explain the growing decline in people’s involvement in the public spheres of activity in the West. Within this context, Benedict Anderson refines his understanding of the nation state as an imagined community by asserting that they are *imagined* communities “because the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion.” (Anderson, 1991: 5). This type of awareness cannot emerge, of course, out of nothing. It is the result of ages and ages of bitter experience of the European continent, with bloody wars and long time unsolvable disputes between ... nation states. Probably politicians of nation states should not forget the words of Richard Handler: “It is only slightly less customary to point out that states have created nations perhaps more frequently than nations states; in the classic nation-states of Western Europe state-building bred national identity rather than simply following from it.” (Handler, 1988: 6). All this development of human thought from exalting a particular form of state to being able to point at its shortcomings is perfectly natural but a strange force behind human mind hinders it from being capable of such understanding from the very beginning. Probably Mattei Dogan was perfectly true when pointing at a sort of maturation process taking place in society as a global phenomenon vis-à-vis the understanding of the political *per se*. Nation-states being looked upon with a

⁴¹ For detailed information, see UNCTAD, World Investment Report, 1995, p. 38;

very critical eye by their citizens means that something of this sort must be happening in the world and that indicators of decline in civic engagement must be interpreted from this perspective, too. The world in which more than twenty-five centuries ago the first political philosophers imagined the best life in the best city state under the best regime, now comes to realize that from that imagination rose not only the good of humanity, but also the wrong of it. The bloody past of our *imagined communities* is the proof of that.

Communism is the other factor that marked the political culture of the people in the Balkans before they could come in contact with the massive American export of liberal democratic values with the leading role attached to the civic culture as the political culture of democracy. We have seen in the historical approaches to the Balkan history that the societies in the region manifesting reservations regarding the political as such is almost a way of life there. Political leadership was not even taken seriously since historical leaders for whom the democratic ideals were never on their agendas have compromised it. In what follows I shall try to explain the impact between the Romanian society shaped by such realities and the communist experience. Since the political culture we are trying to explain here is intended to be a mirror helping the understanding the American upheavals, I shall focus my efforts on the specific case of Romania from now on. The outburst of political participation after December 1989 that could be noticed in the Romanian statistics presented in Chapter I cannot be explained but by previous barriers imposed to participation in public affairs before 1989. However, we could see very clearly that alienation and even refusal to participate politically was a historical feature of the Romanian community as a Balkan community. Unless the American community, the Romanian one had never ever experienced the making of the political community. The only explanation, then, for such a demand for political participation immediately after 1989 on behalf of the Romanians can be explained only by a strange development of their awareness of their own political relevance during the communist times. I have already pointed out that this was a perfectly plausible phenomenon. The Cold War did not mean only a deaf struggle on the nuclear front. Ideology was the strongest currency in the debates between the two conflicting blocks and, even more surprisingly, debate took place. No matter how shocking this might sound for the scholars of the Cold War period, I remind them that on both sides of the Iron Curtain the

philosophical debate was intense and in spite of not communicating officially with each other, representative thinkers from the two camps were intensely informed on the moves of the other side. The very messages of the two blocks were in relation to one another and this is how nowadays American scholars come to look even with some kind of nostalgia toward the past as a time when American identity was not a big problem; its source of identity was the communist world against which it could present itself by contrast. At the same time, the people in the communist east could get from dailies like *Pravda*, or *Scanteia*, or *Borba*, an immense amount of information that contained, along with its empty propagandistic message, the fact that there was *something* that the communists and the capitalists disagreed over. To this it should be added the significant segment of population that practically gave up listening to the central radio broadcasts and preferred the Voice of America or Radio Free Europe in the early 1980s, not to mention the amazement and sincere admiration of Romanians for what they saw happening in Russia after Gorbachev inaugurated the debate over communism there. As a result of such an intense 'cold war' with ideological substratum, people in the communist block managed to make a huge step over many historical stages and become aware that they belonged to a system claiming legitimacy by virtue of an ideology it had adopted. All of a sudden they became *people of ideology*, like their western enemies. Only such a process could explain how Romanians, after never experiencing life in a democratic state, claimed by revolutionary actions the right to democratic liberties and rights.

Besides, the communist regime was installed in Eastern Europe with the Soviet military occupation in the aftermath of the World War II as what R.V. Burks called the 'necessary precondition' for the establishment of Soviet-type political systems outside Stalin's empire. (Burks, 1964: 78). At that time few in Romania would be able to understand what communism meant. In the words of Garrison Walters, "the history of communism in Romania is the story of a chronically weak movement, a political grouping that always suffered from both the lack of the necessary class base as well as the need to swim against a strong nationalist tide." (Walters, 1988: 337). Statistics published soon after the end of World War II show that before the war, in Romania there were only 1000 members of the Communist Party and after the Soviet invasion

membership grew 710 times, the party registering then 710 000 members.⁴² This growth is suggestive of the fact that the respective invasion was decisive in bolstering membership in the Communist Party. Communists' message to the masses contained basically the promise of political relevance of the common people, workers and peasants, to the disadvantage of the small elite that had formed the political class in the country. Andrew C. Janos made it very clear that the communists compelling the civil servants in Romania to leave their offices or to join the Party by the alternative use of threats and recompenses was not a new thing for them. The same techniques were employed just before the war by another bureaucratic party with mass vocation, the single party of King Carol's dictatorship. (Janos, 1970).

Moreover, from the very beginning, the communists did not come with the proposal for a political life according to the traditional understanding at that time in Europe. This politics and *politicianism*, as distorted understanding of their mission by politicians, were already discarded in Romania and people despised the electioneering and pseudo political debates they saw leading to no result with the previous regimes. Instead, the communists proposed good administration of the state. That was actually how they managed to convince the masses that no danger was to be expected from them but only good achievements provided that the masses were to cooperate and work toward this common objective. The workers and the peasants, in spite of opposing resistance to the statist policies of collectivization, eventually gave in to a regime that took care it expressed itself by threatening political means such as political imprisonment or forced labor. Nevertheless, the Romanian communist regime was soon to become famous for its highly efficient system of political recruitment by producing loyalty among intellectuals in a society where *intelligentsia* had been systematically excluded from the space of political relevance. In 1964, for instance, around 42% of the academic personnel and 54% of teachers had joined the Communist Party. (Gilbert, 1975: 155). This efficiency had the effects already suggested in this paper. Teachers and academicians were active in the education system as agents of 'communization' and, in spite of being oriented fundamentally in the opposite direction as compared to the cultivation of individualism in

⁴² According to the data to be found in Fejto, Francois, *Histoire des democraties populaires, I. L'ere de Staline (1945-1952)*, Seuil, Paris, 1952, p. 196;

America, this educational effort led to what was even called at that time 'the betterment of the political level of the masses.' Eventually, when the communist regime was close to its collapse, this elevation was to be talked over especially in the intellectual circles in pejorative terms but it is forgotten nowadays by average intellectuals the fact that before 1947 the same people who talked mockingly in the 1980s would hardly conceive of themselves relevant for the political systems before the imposition of the communist regime.

I want to state at this point very clearly my total and sincere dissociation from the communist ideal, policies, and practices. However, the study of the evolution of a political culture cannot be undertaken by simply passing over half a century of a country's history and its particularities. It is very much true that along with any benefits in terms of political awakening, the general feeling throughout the Romanian society under that regime was one of moral emigration and this should not be a surprise since it is now widely accepted that there the regime had probably the most demobilizing effects in the ex-Soviet block. (Wesson, 1978: 201). However, the Romanian people came out of that era shouting in the streets and even dieing for political rights their parents and grandparents were most probably not even aware of thirty or fifty years before. This is how Romanian people could show the unquestionable attachment for democracy and democratic values in the surveys after 1989 as presented in Chapter I in this study. It would be interesting to see at this moment how an American scholar viewed the world in 1939, right before the beginning of World War II. Robert MacIver asserts in an essay that, "There must be some universal appeal in the name of democracy, for even its destroyers proudly claim possession of its soul. Fascist writers announce that there is the genuine democracy and that so-called democracy is only a sham. Soviet spokesmen assert that they have now the most democratic constitution on earth, and Stalin himself declared that the 1937 elections in Russia were 'the most democratic the world has seen.'" (MacIver, 1970: 324-325). This is how the world presented itself to the Romanians even before the communists installed their regime in 1947. The prestige of democracy already started to be universally accepted even by those who were in practice its greatest enemies and this is how it was to survive until 1989. Moreover, the communists did a great mistake by not limiting themselves to the proposal of good

governance mentioned earlier. The state as ruled by them became soon one to monopolize public and private life very much close to the description made by Orwell in his famous *1984* and what people came to demand in the streets of Bucharest, Timisoara, Sibiu, or Brasov in December 1989 were political rights they had become aware of during the times when the communist educational system was at work as to 'better the political level of the masses' for the benefit, ironically, of the communist regime itself. What a strange suicide by education!?

3.2. THE ALTERNATIVE UNDERSTANDING

I think we can now draw a few interesting conclusions after the inquiry undertaken in this study. It is essential now to admit that the establishment of the states in discussion here was not done with the full consent of all the inhabitants of the territories under the jurisdiction of those states. In America, "when the first Continental Congress met in 1774, no one present was quite sure what it was. The members had been chosen in a variety of ways, by regular colonial assemblies, by extralegal provincial congress, by committees of correspondence. In one way or another each of the members thought of himself as representing the colony he came from, but it was not clear just how." (Morgan, 1989: 263). Romanians as such had even less to do with the establishment of their own state. Barbara Jelavich admits that it is practically impossible to determine whether the inhabitants of the Romanian Principalities had any idea about the nation-state and about loyalty toward it (Jelavich, 2000: I, 214) but, since there is no evidence of any referendum held in those Principalities over the issue of the establishment of state called Romania, it must be accepted the fact that the emergence of the country as such in the international arena was the result of efforts undertaken by local elites. Even the American literature admits of the fact that nation building in America itself followed the establishment of the United States and there is no reason to conceive of that country being the result of political process in which each and every American took part. The secessionist movements and the War of Secession itself prove the fact that there were many issues in the American society that people were not consulted over at the moment when their own state came into being.

Since those founding episodes, however, the United States and Romania took distinct historical trajectories until the twentieth century when the study of political culture became an issue of academic interest and makes now the subject of this comparative approach. Overall, the American political culture, that reached its most positive levels in the 1960s according to most of the American scholars, was the result of a gradual development in which the innate predisposition of the American people to form associations played a crucial role. This was however if not stimulated by the historical contexts, at least not hindered. The Romanian awareness of their own relevance as individuals within the political system became a serious subject of scholar approach only after the fall of, hopefully, the last authoritarian regime in their history as a nation. I have pointed out that that was the curious result of a suicidal effort of mass political education undertaken by the very communist regime that collapsed consequently. The Romanian people came out of the communist nightmare more aware of their relevance as political actors and were able to name political rights not only as notions learned from the high school or university books, but also as something they *wanted* to achieve, something they were aware of as necessary for their being. On the other hand, the most effervescent period in the American civism was apparently registered at a time, in the 1960s, about which all scholars assert that it was crucial for the movement for civil rights in America. In both cases the indicators of civic and political activity declined after objectives were achieved. In the case of Romania many analysts would contradict me here by pointing out that there were exactly the difficulties encountered by the Romanian civil society associations in penetrating the space monopolized by the political class that determined the decline in civic action in that country. However, it should not be forgotten that the decline started before many of the projects of civil society organizations were even clarified and became accelerated in a very short period of time. Besides, explanations for this decline vary so much from one scholar to another that it becomes very difficult at this stage to identify what is really the cause.

According to the periodization of history proposed in the end of the second chapter of this paper, we can practically place both the United States and Romania in the citizen age. Few people could probably specify before 1947 what were the differences between the offers of communism, fascism, or liberal democracy. Most historians

underscore the fact that democracy, as in the essay by Robert MacIver, was present in the speeches of virtually all politicians at the time when liberal democracy was in competition with the other two major ideologies of the twentieth century. One can therefore assert that no matter the aims of those behind fascism and communism, the main themes of political speech came from the liberal democratic thought. However, in a very short time the authoritarian regimes build upon the fascist and communist doctrines showed signs of collapse. In the next century the two competitors of liberal democracy may not even be taken seriously but only as regrettable derivations from it. What happens within the liberal democracy itself should be treated much more carefully because the decline of the sources of legitimization within its own perimeter, in spite of being considerably slow, is a more and more visible process. As in the words of Morris Janowitz, "The 'crisis' in political legitimacy emerges not as a sudden manifestation, the outcome of a particular historical event or political personality, but rather as the result of continuing sociopolitical change." (Janowitz, 1978: 11). Thomas Bender points out in *Community and Social Change in America* that the "technology-destroys-community" theme is as old as the American scholarship. He noticed a serial "community breakdown repeating itself in the 1650s, 1690s, 1740s, 1780s, 1820s, 1850s, 1880s, and 1920s," (Bender, 1978: 51) and wondered rightfully, "How many times can community collapse in America?" (Bender, 1978: 46). But the comparative approach undertaken here identified two constant trends in two very different political cultures. They are related to the democratic political system *per se*! We agreed that the answers people offered in the surveys presented in Chapter II indicated that they manifest at the same time appreciation for democracy as value and distrust toward the political class. I use insistently here this almost Marxist term because even in America the political sphere has ceased long time ago to be one open practically to every citizen in the United States, while in Romania I doubt it will ever be. Public opinion, as Toqueville warned almost two centuries ago, filters to the extreme the accession to political positions in the United States and Americans should open their eyes to countries like Romania if they want to understand what could happen to them one day. The failure of politicians in Romania to offer efficient solutions for the improvement of living standards determined a rapid decline in support for both governments – Socialist and Christian-Democrat – that came to power

after 1989. Their political color did not matter; the performance of the system as such was decisive. The populist measures they took only prolonged the economic crisis after the fall of the communist regime and did not convince the electorate who gave very drastic decisions by changing the government in power in both 1996 and 2000 elections. These electoral penalties did not bring the expected result and people's disappointment was shown growing constantly in the statistics concerning their political participation *per se*.

In America, the dramatic events of September 11, 2001, brought a change that the American political class should take very seriously into account. I consider the most significant the fact that, after that date, it is hard to conceive of the United States affording to turn its attention away from the international scene as it used to do repeatedly during the times of its famous isolationist policies. Those periods were caused by a perceived need for focusing on domestic affairs, a governmental reflex that looks more and more like a luxury in the American political arena. The mission of punishment in Afghanistan will continue probably for a long time until all remains of the AlQaeda network (Osama bin Laden included) will be annihilated and who knows where else the American soldiers will have to fight in order to accomplish that task. The war this year in Iraq will most probably force the government in Washington vest considerable efforts in the post-war reconstruction process in that country. It is by now clear that the oil reserves in the Caspian area are subject of much interest at the White House and many developments there are expected to raise the interest in the American political and business circles. One scholar of diplomatic history asserted that, "The 'world' that preoccupied Americans in the early nineteenth century was Spanish Florida, or British-Indian alliances in the Mississippi Valley. The world that preoccupies Americans in the late twentieth century stretches around the globe and into heavens. The values, even the political system, that Americans employ in dealing with those different worlds have nevertheless remained remarkably constant." (LaFeber, 1990: 272). With such a busy international agenda at the beginning of this century it becomes hard to imagine that those political values will mean the same for the American citizen of the future, or that the future governments of the United States will find solutions for what I consider to be the greatest dilemma of American politics in the decades to come: balancing between the

international and domestic political agendas. My main reason for raising these questions here is that this constant decline of political engagement as indicated by most studies undertaken by American scholars is, in my opinion, rooted exactly in the cognitive relation between the people and the political as they perceive it and as portrayed by Almond and Verba. My interpretation of this phenomenon, as pointed out on so many occasions here, goes beyond stereotypical approaches. I employed the philosophical inquiry in Chapter II because I feel there is a deep need now for a different perspective, for a different understanding of the political we deal with when talking political culture. By studying what I like to call the adventure of democracy in a country like Romania, I could show that no matter the democratic experience, people there learned very rapidly to manifest the same way as the people in a much older democracy. Their disappointment is not against democracy as an idea, but against the way it is at work in their society. Therefore, my intuition is that we have here a problem of understanding and not only a simple one; it is a misunderstanding placed deep in our minds and coming from a very remote past, from a-historical times. The misunderstanding of the political might be difficult to grasp now but it is suggested by all the data included in this study.

It is very nice to read, especially for an American, passages that run like this: "The great advantage of the Americans is that they have arrived at a state of democracy without having to endure a democratic revolution, and that they are born equal instead of becoming so." (Tocqueville, 1981: 398). However, Tocqueville wrote it at a time when, according to my theory, Man was just about to become a citizen in his own world and manifested an understandable enthusiasm about those upheavals. Since then, the world has changed considerably and America together with it. We saw here that the achievement of civic and political goals led to a significant decline in people's political participation. To me this means simply that Francis Fukuyama was fundamentally wrong when announcing the end of history with the ideological victory of liberal democracy in the world. Humanity does not take rest and, moreover, democracy contains in itself the dilemma inductive of unrest – the achievement of goals makes human associations lose, on one hand, their interest in the process and, on the other hand, matures the individuals establishing those associations. They become aware more and more of their own individuality and of the multiple goals presupposed by that individuality. Should there be

associations established for the achievement of each of those goals? Or, should people necessarily accept being regimented in associations even in cultural spaces where such acts are viewed as humiliating for individual's dignity? The ex-communist world is such a space where the individual was literally put under the yoke of the community and a generalized non-acceptance attitude vis-à-vis such an approach should not be a surprise there. Democracy in America might be a political concept inappropriate for humanity ready to enter its Political age, the age of its awareness of the real meaning of the Political as part and condition of Man's Being as Becoming, as maturation.

How much the Americans have changed since the time Tocqueville wrote about them is hard to say. In my opinion, what we saw happening as a very long process in the United States, that is, the erosion of social capital and enthusiasm for political engagement can be seen in miniature in the reactions of the Romanian people to the democratic mechanisms as developed by the American experience. Of course, many may remind me here that there are innumerable aspects of the democratic machine that are still not at work or do not work properly in the Romanian system and I cannot but agree with them. However, this does not explain the decline in the prestige of some civic associations that were enjoying at a given moment a high level of trust. The Civic Alliance, for instance, was one of the most successful up to the moment when it entered political scene after turning political party. This episode had to do with the improper working of the democratic system in Romania; the decision of the Alliance to compete in elections as a political party was widely supported by exactly the intellectuals that were most active in its entourage and the popularity of the organization, in spite of its high intellectual level, dropped catastrophically at the contact with the political. It is not those poor intellectuals' decision to compete politically that ruined the Civic Alliance but the Alliance being associated with the political – the political is the ill man here.

For a better understanding of my point, let us analyze a fragment chosen at random from a book written by one of the most respected political scientists in the United States, famous for his comparative approaches to political systems around the world. He states that, "In democracies, the rights of the minority must be respected. Populism has a tendency to deny these rights, to assume that those values do not agree with the basic consensus of the society should be driven out. The populist source of the values which

legitimate authority in post-revolutionary societies must be supplemented with a respect for the rule of law if a stable democracy is to result. But where the law lacks the support of old traditions, the institutionalization of a respect for the rule of law is difficult.” (Lipset, 1979: 11). Lipset wrote these lines in a book dedicated to the United States as the *First New Nation*. He suggests in the fragment above that ‘the institutionalization of a respect for the rule of law’ is a necessary supplement for populist sources of legitimization in post-revolutionary societies ‘if a stable democracy is to result.’ His adversaries would criticize him saying probably that populist policies are unacceptable from the project phase, while his supporters might point out that, indeed, a stable democracy is impossible in, say, Romania, since the institutionalization of the respect for the rule of law is almost inexistent. However, very few of the scholars active now within the domain of political science would dare say something like that: ‘institutionalization of absolutely anything having to do with human affairs (politics included) leads to the establishment of systems bound to remain inert in their institutional bonds and capable of posing that inertia against the natural becoming of the human societies they are at work for and within.’ Take, for instance, respect for the rule of law itself. Imagine it as institutionalized. However, people change and mature themselves individually and, eventually, as a community of people. The respect is for the rule of which law? The law as issued by legislators ‘representing’ the people in the state affairs. But this is a picture of a state still in its Hobbesian age, the age in which people were subjects. This rule of law addresses subjects as an expression of the political whose meaning is manufactured in a space of representation and not participation; those who expect a more politically participative attitude on behalf of the individuals in a political system such constituted may be scholars but not thinkers. People change and mature themselves much faster than systems. To impose to them nowadays something so far from and outside of their own continuously maturing and, anyway, active understanding is irrational and humiliating and a mere denial of humanity as impossible when left without its decisional capacity, its political; a Political that humanity *is* more and more capable of perceiving after millennia of thought over these issues.

The decline in political participation does not call for a reformation within the political system, but for a reformation of the understanding of the political as such and of

political culture as the knowledge of the Political correctly defined. Otherwise, the understanding of the political culture itself in terms of political participation might lead to even higher levels of alienation as a reaction to the stubborn inertia of the political systems. The people in the two countries under study here are undoubtedly on the way toward becoming political as the final stage of Man's understanding of his own Being. Let us hope the states they live in will eventually become those systems capable of responding instantaneously to the individuals' inputs and so become apt to survive in the history of Man.



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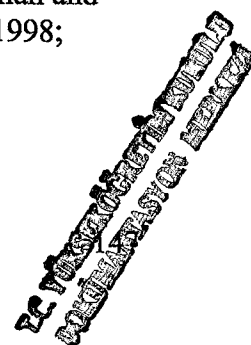
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