

### Political science - Romania

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Daniel Barbu

## Political Science - Romania<sup>1</sup>

For the social sciences at large, the rise and predicament of Romanian political science, as important an experience as it may be for Romanian academia, is a topic fated to a certain degree of obscurity. On an individual basis, Romanian scholars may seek respectability and recognition in the international scientific community, but no one would expect them to collectively set the tone for political science. And it is only fair to say that marginality is perhaps the inescapable fate of all political science enterprises in Central and Eastern Europe. For American, British, German, French, and even Italian political sciences are not only dominant, but also self-reliant and self-sufficient. Therefore, it would be more interesting to look at what Romanian political science *is*, rather than at what it *does* or tries to do. That is to say that Romanian political science can be noteworthy only to the extent it is comprehended as a political object in its own right, regardless of the political objects it currently creates, addresses, and explores.

If we adopt Theodore Lowi's contention that the way we study politics usually conforms to the politics we study, i.e., that every regime has the inclination to produce a politics consonant with itself and that, subsequently, every regime also tends to generate a political science consistent with itself<sup>1</sup>, then it follows that, in becoming aware of what Romanian political science tries to be, we might just learn something about Romania's post-communist polity and politics.

Seemingly, such a functional assessment does not do violence to a substantial and refined body of literature. Indeed, Romanian political science never actually existed and it is still on the fringes of existence. This explains to a large extent the popularity enjoyed after 1989 by all sorts of writings on and about politics that seem to indicate to a naive eye that the discipline itself has taken off. This statement is paradoxical only at first glance, since a science embedded in strong theoretical traditions and empirical expertise does not usually easily find popular favor. For there can be free admittance only to those intellectual territories that are not yet methodologically mapped and conceptually chartered. As soon as an intellectual terrain is colonized by a given science, admittance is regulated by a number of restrictions and exclusions. Academic clearance and scientifically approved blueprints are henceforth needed.

Indeed, if the very notion of "scientific discipline" is epistemologically weak, it is nevertheless indisputable that it has a clear social content to the extent it acknowledges the existence within the intellectual arena of a distinct group of "specialists" defined by certain rules of scientific production and reproduction. Let us take for granted that a scientific discipline is fully established when at least four criteria are fulfilled<sup>2</sup>: consensus on the very name and purpose of the discipline; agreement on the topics that fall within the purview of the discipline and that can be satisfactorily addressed by no other branch of science; a number of institutions of education and research recognized and legitimated by the academic community; the accumulation of a sufficient amount of resources and tools, such as journals, textbooks, publication series, colloquia, conferences, and the like.

My argument is that three of these four criteria are not yet completely met, despite the quite impressive quantity of translations, essays, commentaries, books, and articles related to politics that are currently published in Romania. First of all, there is no consensus on the appropriate name for the study of politics. *Political science*, *political studies*, *political sciences*<sup>3</sup>, and "*politology*" are still indistinctly used, both in academia and by the media. Second, there is no accord among "specialists" on what exactly the science of politics is and does, and there is even an insidious doubt – among some sociologists, for instance – that a separate science of politics can or should

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<sup>1</sup> Alina Mungiu-Pippidi, of the National School of Political Studies and Public Administration in Bucharest, wrote a commentary on the first draft of this report. Some of the data she provided were helpful in enlarging the scope of my survey.

exist at all. Finally, Romanian political scientists did not begin to publish books based on original thorough empirical or theoretical research until, at the earliest, the end of the first post-communist decade; moreover, the first Romanian academic peer-reviewed journal of political science was not published until 2001. The only criterion that seems to be somehow satisfied is the institutional one, since there are several solid departments of political science and a fair number of graduates from them. Nevertheless, even on this level, it is still unclear whether political science has a name and a realm of its own. Paradoxically enough, two out of the three major departments do not teach political science as a discipline in its own right.

To wind up, a common understanding of politics and its science does not seem to exist in Romania. There are still reservations about the possibility of scientifically explaining politics on the basis of endogenous approaches, as political science claims to be able to do<sup>4</sup>. In the eyes of many Romanian social scientists, politics seems to be the mere anecdotal surface of otherwise deep-rooted social and economic phenomena. Politics is commonly seen as driven mainly by societal incentives and economic stimulus, as devoid of its own rationality, and virtually always as commanded by an external rationale. Therefore, it is probably safe to say that, at least in this respect, dialectic and historical materialism has probably lost much of its reputation but not all of its influence.

To be ironically faithful to Marxist teleology, this situation should be referred to as a *sublation*, meaning, as Hegel did by this term, that scientific socialism is concurrently cancelled and preserved in the make-up of post-communist political science. This survey tries to explore the reasons for this vernacular survival of an unexpectedly enduring Marxism-Leninism beyond the demise of both communism and its scientific explanation of history and society.

## 1. Analysis of the pre-1989 situation

In pre-communist Romania, political science practically did not exist as an autonomous field of teaching and research. For a short time after 1918, the University of Cernăuți, an institution of higher education established under Austrian rule, inherited a political science chair held by Alexandru Papacostea, an insulated and unavailing scholar who died in 1927 with no scientific posterity. In 1924, the School of Law at the University of Bucharest created a doctoral degree in “political and economic sciences”, to be granted after a two-year curriculum. As late as 1938, an Institute of Moral and Political Sciences was created within that School of Law to provide an institutional framework for PhD law students who had an academic interest in politics. The approach to politics at this Institute was merely a legal one, political science being studied as the science of the State, very much in the manner it was – and sometimes still is – practiced in the French *Facultés de Droit*. At any rate, the Institute did not live long enough to contribute to the birth of political science as an academic discipline, since it was closed down in the early 1940s. But it is worth mentioning because Ghita Ionescu, editor of the British Journal *Government and Opposition* and a distinguished scholar of communism (Ionescu, 1964, 1967) and of the political process of European integration, was educated there.

One of the reasons for political science’s precarious institutional set-up in pre-communist Romania was the overall triumph of sociology, itself a newborn discipline after World War I. In the view of Dimitrie Gusti, the prominent founder and mastermind of Romanian sociology and the chairman of the Romanian Social Institute, sociology should have been and was actually considered to have become the complete – both normative and descriptive – science of the nation, which could answer all the questions raised by the social, economic, and political life of the Romanian national community. For instance, the critical legal and political question “what kind of Constitution does Greater Romania need?” was regarded as belonging to the field of an inclusive social science understood and practiced as the overall science of the nation. In this setting, even a conspicuous political object like political parties received a philosophical-sociological treatment

(Negulescu, 1926) ignorant of and indifferent to the well-established international political science literature of that time.

This particular variety of sociology, which emphasizes and investigates the national community as an indivisible structure and is therefore uninterested in and avoids the study of divisions and conflicts, owed its undisputed predominance to the mainstream intellectual tradition marshaled around the “social question”. Before and after World War I, it was incumbent on any major Romanian social thinker to address the twofold issue of a resilient peasant society allegedly reluctant to give birth to a viable domestic bourgeois middle class. Constantin Dobrogeanu-Gherea, Constantin Stere, Constantin Rădulescu-Motru, Ștefan Zeletin, Șerban Voinea, Mihail Manoilescu, Virgil Madgearu, Lucrețiu Pătrășcanu, and Dimitrie Gusti himself explored this question and its political consequences along various theoretical lines ranging all the way from orthodox and revisionist Marxism to corporatism.

As politically incorrect as it may seem today, Mihail Manoilescu was the pre-communist Romanian political author who enjoyed the widest and longest-lasting international reputation. Not only he was the leading European theorist of corporatism in the very age of corporatism (Manoilescu, 1941), but also his thinking is considered to have provided the ideological framework for the Brazilian *Estado Novo* and its subsequent authoritarian incarnations. His political economy is apparently still in use in some South American universities. Albeit an economist by training and intent, Manoilescu developed an articulate theory of party-state relations in a totalitarian regime, embedded in extensive first-hand observation. His analysis distinguished between German, Italian, and Soviet versions of totalitarianism, seeing the first as a dual political system with powers shared equally by the state bureaucracy and the party elite, the second as a state using the party for its own purposes, and the third as a state utterly controlled by the party.

To construct as accurate a genealogical table of the discipline as possible, it should be remarked that, despite the institutional monopoly of legal studies and the intellectual eminence of sociology, such authors as Marcel Ivan and Mattei Dogan nevertheless undertook proper and valuable empirical research in political science in the 1930s and 1940s, mainly in the area of electoral participation and party performance. A consummate statistician, Ivan published a highly formal survey of the electoral conduct of the political parties that emerged in the aftermath of World War I (Ivan, 1933). After authoring a comprehensive analysis of inter-war Romanian politics (Dogan, 1946), Mattei Dogan left Romania to become an outstanding voice in French political sociology (e.g. Dogan, 1982, 1990). This type of quantitative analysis, which tried to crossbreed statistics and sociology and which was as close to formal political science approaches as we find, had no follow-up in Romania.

Immediately after the communist takeover, a political school was established to ensure, first, ideological control, and later the Party’s monopoly over the social sciences. Created in 1945 as the Party’s training unit for its own rank and file under the name of the Ștefan Gheorghiu Academy for Training and Advancement of the Leadership Cadres of the Central Committee of the Romanian Communist Party, this institution was designed as an ideological training center for Party activists and state bureaucrats. Several types of curricula were offered. Short-term studies (usually six months) were intended for all party members selected for various responsibilities either in the Party apparatus or in public administration. More thorough post-graduate studies, including a doctorate, were offered to those who had chosen to become ideological trainers for the Party, journalists, or merely scientific socialism instructors for institutions of higher education. In 1969, an institute of economic management was attached to the Party Academy to provide professional expertise to the chief executive officers of the public sector economy.

One year later, an Academy of Political and Social Sciences was established under the authority of the Propaganda Division of the Central Committee. In the wake of the “mini-cultural revolution” of 1971, the institution’s task was to explore the procedures to be followed to translate an untidy ideological control into a tight scientific monopoly. The mission was accomplished in 1975, when the new Academy held sway over all research institutes in history, law, philosophy,

sociology, art history, and other social sciences previously subordinate to the old Romanian Academy. In this way, the official politics of the social sciences shifted from supplying general orientation and providing casual censorship to direct involvement in research policies, programs, planning, tools, methods, and teams.

In scale and scope, these changes in the politics of science mirrored a critical and major transformation of the official science of politics. Indeed, in the late 1960s and early 1970s, the teaching of the Ștefan Gheorghiu Academy was no longer embedded in orthodox Marxism-Leninism, and prominent figures of early scientific socialism, such as Radu Florian, lost much of their influence. As the Party itself changed its methods of social mobilization and inclusion, the official ideology framed by the Party Academy became more concerned with development issues, economic management, and technological revolution. How to escape backwardness and establish a modern economy were the topics addressed by theoreticians like Mircea Malița and Mihai Botez, who never questioned the political monopoly of the Party, even when they turned into dissidents, as Botez eventually did. In fact, for this line of thinking, which prefigures the Chinese pragmatism of the 1980s and 1990s, politics was not viewed as being essential, but as really existing only in the form of good policies of economic growth and social improvement. This new scientific course roughly coincides with a short period of political de-Stalinization.

Some outstanding authors, however, did emerge from, if not against, this background. In the long run, the most influential of them in terms of the discipline turned out to be Vladimir Tismăneanu. Unsurprisingly, he started in Romania as a liberal student of Euro-Marxism (Tismaneanu, 1976), to later become, once reborn as an American political scientist, a scholar of civil society in Central and Eastern Europe (Tismaneanu, 1991) and a stern critic of anti-liberal and radical intellectual and political trends in the region (Tismaneanu, 1998). In the 1990s, he served as a role model and mentor for numerous Romanian political scientists. The second to deserve special mention is Pavel Câmpeanu, a communist militant in his early stages, who evolved into a significant student of Stalinism (Campeanu, 1986) and who, in the late 1980s, was the Romanian voice in the seminars that the New School of Social Research in New York opened to prominent dissidents from Central and Eastern Europe.

Three other major scholars, although not political scientists by training or vocation, bordered on the study of politics. Two of them were confessed and innovative Marxists, the third a resolute anti-Communist. Henri H. Stahl, the revered proponent of Romanian social history and of the national sociological tradition, had an original hand in the Marxist theory of the modes of production (Stahl, 1979). Zigu Ornea, a literary historian, substantiated some of the major trends of Romanian political and social thinking (e.g. Ornea, 1969). The third, the historian Vlad Georgescu, not only published invaluable quantitative studies on the framing of the public space and the evolution of Romanian political ideas (Georgescu, 1972, 1987), but also, as an émigré, headed the Romanian department of Radio Free Europe. Be it as it may, these authors did not tone up the Romanian intellectual landscape, for in the late 1970s and during the 1980s, the social sciences sagged under the weight of a hegemonic national communism. As for the study of politics, the stage belonged to theoreticians no longer disposed to base their interpretation of social and political life on classical Marxist theory or on the critique of backwardness, but on the works of Nicolae Ceaușescu, the unchallenged leader of the Romanian Communist Party. For them, politics existed only in the shape of Romanian national interest. The leading character of this cast was undoubtedly Ovidiu Trăznea, chairman of the exclusive, Party-members-only Romanian Association of Political Science, which set up in 1968. In this role, he was the official political scientist of the regime (Ceterchi, Trăznea, and Vlad, 1979).

Notwithstanding this development, the various interpretations of politics under communism shared the common belief that social life cannot be explained in political terms and that, therefore, political science had no reason to exist and that its task, whatever it may have been earlier, is far better accomplished by other sciences, above all economics. Yet, such an approach is compelled to use a rhetorical structure that finally lends itself to justifying the very presumptions it professed to

deny: the autonomy of politics and the legitimacy of a science of politics. The various intellectual shapes assumed by Romanian scientific socialism (orthodox, liberal, developmental, nationalist) could not or would not abandon their Leninist roots and the revolutionary-type circular reasoning such roots entail. A sound Marxist assumption indicates that politics is closely tied to and dependent upon class structures and economic relations. On this account, politics should be meaningless in the face of knowledge. Nevertheless, Leninism assumed and indeed proved that politics might in fact invent class structures and economic relations. So what is the place of political science in this setting? Under state socialism, the science of politics equals political action itself. Its practitioner is the government, and the government alone. Political science would therefore be the self-consciousness of the government, a government that acts – in Marxist terminology – not only in itself, but also for itself. Political science was subsequently the study of Party policies and Party language, inasmuch as they tried to respond to the people’s scientifically validated wants. As a consequence, the understanding of politics in Romania before 1989 was not only wants-oriented, rather than rights-based, but also verged on a perverse form of public choice theory. Curiously, if not ominously, this is the major lesson post-communist political science has learned from scientific socialism.

## 2. Redefinition of the discipline since 1990

If a unified paradigm is needed to give rise to a scientific discipline<sup>5</sup>, it is unquestionable that such a broad intellectual construct, based on a series of common observations and shared assumptions, did not immediately emerge after 1989 in the Romanian academia as far as political science is concerned. On the contrary, Romanian social scientists ever since seem to follow at least two separate and contending sets of instructions on where to look for the appropriate explanations of what politics is. And they do so in a rather intuitive way. They move instinctively within disconnected “disciplinary matrices”, to use Thomas Kuhn’s words, according not only to the intellectual experiences they went through before 1989, but also to their different understandings of how and why scientific research should be organized. For the sake of clarity, let us call these two paradigms *post-Marxist-Leninist* and *neo-Weberian*, bearing in mind that they are not to be interpreted as evidence of a fully conscious operation of theoretical and methodological choice. Rather, these paradigms have themselves recruited their proponents, for most Romanian political scientists qualify as “unconscious thinkers” impaired by theoretical unawareness who react to the change in political regime and to the expansion of democratic politics by spontaneously resorting to “conceptual stretching”<sup>6</sup>: they merely strain their old methods and language to cover a broader and far more diverse array of political issues than the ones tackled a decade before.

The first stream cuts across various scientific contexts and methodological assumptions to adopt an all-inclusive public choice idiom for which politics is a dependent variable that rests upon the overriding problem of acquisition, as conceived by Marx. This is tantamount to saying that economy-based relationships and relative scarcity command the configuration of public interests as expressed in the political arena. Consequently, property ownership, deprivation, impoverishment, government performance, and party competition for control of the means of production and to appropriate the voter’s consciousness become the linchpins of politics.

The second paradigm pulls several intellectual threads together to convey the overall idea, of Weberian descent, that the collapse of communism and the social deconstruction it induced should be experienced as an opportunity to establish a new political bond, if not a new social contract (*Vergesellschaftung*). Hence, politics is held to be a rationalization of public conducts within a system of meanings (*Sinnzusammenhänge*), which takes in such categories of beliefs as legitimacy, the demystification of authority, the production of and conformity to norms, and the function of the market.

And if this is the case, if indeed there are two ways of explaining what politics is all about<sup>7</sup>, then it follows that Romanian political science, as a newborn academic field of study and research,

had no real intellectual opportunity to grow into a coherent and self-sustained discipline. For the dialectics of continuity versus change not only marked the evolution of paradigms, but also largely commanded the process of the institutionalization of political science.

Even if democracy superseded state socialism quite unexpectedly, those at home in scientific socialism in its developmental-nationalist Romanian version were not caught by surprise. Not that they foresaw the event, but they were, above all, experts in the politics of social sciences. So they changed their vocabulary without unwrapping their understanding of politics from its Leninist core and, above all, without reshuffling their personnel. Trăznea was naturally re-elected to chair the Romanian Association of Political Science<sup>8</sup>, while his younger colleagues (Vasile Secăreș, Vladimir Pasti, Cornel Codiță, Ioan Mircea Pașcu, Paul Dobrescu) immediately went to serve as advisors to the post-communist president and to the National Salvation Front leadership, while engineering the survival of the Party Academy. They spontaneously followed what might be called a logic of appropriateness, as opposed to a logic of consequence, which would have naturally eliminated them from the public square. As a group, they did not see democracy as a radical political consequence of the communist collapse. Instead, they were ready to embrace a kind of “state democracy” as an appropriate instrument to satisfy the economic and social wants that state socialism failed to fulfill. The collapse of communism did not even automatically root out all institutions linked to Marxism-Leninism and scientific socialism. They simply reshaped themselves, taking on new names and embarking on new missions, but not changing their frame of mind.

The Ștefan Gheorghiu Academy of the Central Committee of the Romanian Communist Party is perhaps the foremost public institution that has survived, almost unimpaired, the breakdown of the communist regime. To wash away their previous commitment to scientific socialism, its teaching staff first sought to join the University of Bucharest. But they soon came to understand that there would be no *Schuldfrage* debate to question their past and that they could afford to stand up again as an influential group. Thus, in the fall of 1991, the government decided to refinance the former Academy as a public institution under the name the National School of Political Studies and Public Administration. For all intents and purposes, this institution, presided over by Vasile Secăreș, the last secretary of the communist cell of the Party Academy, and Ovidiu Trăznea, chairman of the Department of Political Science until 1996, preserved the goal and structure as well as most of the faculty of the former Party Academy. Even the institute created in the late 1960s to provide management skills to high officials of the socialist economy continued to be associated with the National School under the label IROMA (The Romanian Institute of Management). A two-year course of general training in international relations and public administration and policies was offered to candidates from various academic backgrounds to enable them to take civil servant positions. Not until 1995 did the National School of Political Studies and Public Administration start to organize undergraduate studies in political science, public administration, and journalism. Since 1998, a one-year graduate program has been added every fall, the specializations covered being gender studies, development and governance, international relations, and political anthropology. The School now has three departments – political sciences (chaired by Adrian Miroiu, a former editor of the Communist Party’s own publishing house), public administration, and journalism (headed by Paul Dobrescu, the last secretary of the communist cell of the Party’s official newspaper). It is currently establishing two new departments, sociology and economics.

Meanwhile, after rejecting the survivors of the Party Academy, the University of Bucharest decided to foster its own program of training and research in political science. At first, between 1991 and 1994, the department assigned to this mission was cast in the same mold as a French *Institut d’Etudes Politiques*. This explains why political science was first taught in French and why its roots lay mostly in European studies, legal studies, and political philosophy, and less in quantitative research. As of 1995, the Department of Political Science was restructured with the aim of developing three directions of undergraduate study in the major of political science:

political science, international relations, and public policy. Ever since, the methodological groundwork of the curricula is commanded by a variety of theoretical and empirical orientations, which tend to be increasingly “Americanized”. As a consequence and to make this diversity of approaches more transparent, the department’s languages of instruction are English, French, and Romanian. The department currently enrolls almost one thousand undergraduate and graduate students, making it the largest institution to serve the discipline. Foreign students (from France, Sweden, the United States, Switzerland, Italy, Austria, Lebanon, Turkey, Tunisia, Iraq, Albania, Cameroon, Congo, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Guinea, and Moldova) sometimes comprise 10% of this population, which is definitely unusual for Romanian higher education institutions in the field of social sciences and which tends to confirm that the department has acquired a fair international reputation. Today, most of the regular faculty members have at least one degree from a Western European university and are either recruited from research institutes or selected from among young graduates. In fact, the first generation of Romanians to hold a regular BA degree in political science graduated from the University of Bucharest in 1995.

The next generation, of 1996, was trained in the second-largest Romanian university, the University Babeş-Bolyai of Cluj-Napoca, which started its own chair of political science within the Department of History in 1992 and restructured it in 1995 as an autonomous Department of Political Science and Public Administration. This was a critical juncture for the history of the teaching of political science in Cluj, since the department gradually distanced itself from the pre-1989 chair of scientific socialism, in which it was originally based, and extricated itself from being chaired by such survivors of national-communism as Vasile Puşcaş. Cluj was privileged to mature as part of a partnership network that included mostly political science departments from American universities. Today, led by Vasile Boari, the department develops three directions of studies: political science, public administration, and journalism. Instruction is in Romanian, except for a journalism section in Hungarian. The political science faculty members come mostly from the faculties of history, law, and philosophy. The department offers undergraduate programs and an MA degree in post-communism and globalization. Since 1999, a new correspondence course program has inflated the number of students with about 100 units per year. These particular undergraduate students, usually already holding a BA and engaged in a professional career, do not physically attend courses and are supposed to get only writing credits.

Finally, in 1996, the University of Iaşi created an MA curriculum in political science within the Department of Philosophy and Social Sciences; it was devoted mainly to political theory. Chaired by Anton Carpinschi, the program developed eventually also on the undergraduate level and is very active in promoting the advancement of the discipline in its Moldavian regional setting. Also, a small political science section was established in 1998 at the University of Oradea. The same year, a political science program started within the Department of Law and Public Administration at the Lucian Blaga University of Sibiu, and a Department of Political Science and Communication was established at the West University of Timișoara. So far, these institutions have few faculty members and enroll a limited number of students.

Several other departments that do not offer majors or degrees in political science claim a particular interest in this discipline. Three such cases are worth mention. First and foremost, the Chair of Politology, which is still operating within the Polytechnic University of Bucharest as a legacy of the chair of scientific socialism, which was on duty before 1989 as in all other Romanian universities. Indeed, scientific socialism, political economy, and, since the early 1980s, a fictitious discipline called “fundamental problems of the history of the Fatherland and of the Party” were mandatory courses in all institutions of higher education. Today, beginning undergraduates in technical sciences are still offered introductory courses in politics taught by instructors with teaching experience in Marxism-Leninism. Second, the Department of European Studies at the University of Cluj-Napoca offers its students a significant number of courses in political science, sometimes overlapping the Political Science Department’s mission and faculty. Third, the chair of moral and political philosophy of the Department of Philosophy at the University of Bucharest



avows a stake in the study of politics, though it does not offer courses or seminars even remotely related to political science, except for a master's degree program in public policies organized with the informal assistance of the National School of Political Studies and Public Administration. Four other would-be political science departments created within private universities should be added to the list, although they do not have an appropriate faculty of their own: Banatul University of Timișoara since Fall 1997, the Christian University Dimitrie Catemir of Bucharest, the Petre Andrei University of Iași, and the Bogdan Vodă University of Baia Mare and Cluj-Napoca since Fall 1998. A closer look at the Department of Political Science at the Bogdan Vodă University makes it a neat case study that immediately and succinctly tells the tale of how private Romanian institutions of higher education are working: its current dean and leading instructors are the former dean and the most distinguished members of the homologous department at the Babeș-Bolyai University. The same dialectics of change versus continuity seem to dictate the institutional alignments of research.

Along with the National School of Political Studies and Public Administration, the Institute of Social Theory, attached to the Romanian Academy, is a leftover from the former Party Academy. Initially led by Radu Florian, a genuine and unreconstructed veteran of Marxism-Leninism, it was created in 1990 for the overt survivors of scientific socialism. Curiously enough, in only a decade, the Institute repeated the history of its institutional predecessor. In the early 1990s, the Institute represented the core of Romanian Neo-Marxism. After Florian's death, the research team renewed not only its composition but also its interests, shifting from the intellectual left to a more nationalist vision. The Institute was thus tagged after Constantin Rădulescu-Motru, a pre-communist social thinker of extreme nationalist convictions. In December 2001, it was again renamed the Institute of Political Sciences and International Relations, and, ever since, the government has seemed willing to assume a direct share in its management.

Facing this blatant expression of continuity, the University of Bucharest established in 1995 its own Center of Political Research, which became in 1999 the Institute for Political Research, acting also as the graduate school of the Department of Political Science. Two-year MA programs are available in the fields of political science, international relations, and public policies, and doctoral degrees are available in political science. As a research facility, the Institute fosters the broadest range of academic inquiries and debates in political science understood as an autonomous discipline, equipped with specific methods and approaches.

Nor is that all. The Department of Political Science at the Babeș-Bolyai University created in 1997 its own Academic Center for Social Studies, which devotes considerable effort to empirical research, undertaken with a superior methodological thoroughness and published mostly by means of the electronic journal *East-Political Science Review*. Moreover, some of the activities of a couple of Institutes of the Romanian Academy in Bucharest come close to political science. The Institute of Sociology set up a research team to explore electoral campaigns and media response to political messages, while the Institute for the Study of Totalitarianism embarked upon an extensive study of such phenomena as the collectivization of agriculture and political repression under communism.

### **3. Core theoretical and methodological orientations**

The end of the Cold War and the extinction of communism, both as an ideology and as a practice of government, have not only made possible an unparalleled experiment in building a democratic order in Central and Eastern Europe, but have also opened up a most extraordinary intellectual opportunity: to understand and compare what had previously been neither understandable nor comparable. Political science was established in Romania amid the debris of scientific socialism in the realization that the problems and concerns of new and old democracies are beginning to converge. Ever since 1989, Romanian scholars in the field of social sciences, intellectual history, and political philosophy have been seeking to fulfill a long-frustrated desire by extending their

teaching and research interest in political issues. The result is the emergence of a growing body of scholars permeated by a sense of critical engagement with European and American intellectual and political traditions that inspired the modern notions of democracy, pluralism, political liberty, individual freedom, and civil rights. For reasons to be explored hereafter, theirs is neither an unchallenged nor a mainstream endeavor.

In the wake of the downfall of the communist monopoly over the interpretation of politics, three tendencies were immediately manifest. They should be understood against a background of complete methodological starvation, since before 1989 not only were Romanian social sciences, including history and legal studies, completely opaque to any form of correlation to Western theoretical and conceptual debates, but social scientists usually simply refrained from asking whether or not there is a method of scientific inquiry to underpin the methodological routine of their research.

First, several researchers in history, philosophy, and law tried to piece together their academic experiences and join forces with junior scholars trained in political sciences or related fields at West European or North American universities in order to lay down a solid theoretical foundation for the emergence of political science. They could not depend on any indigenous tradition, since political science was not a discipline rooted in the pre-war Romanian academic heritage and had not even been smuggled as such into Romanian social sciences during the communist period. Their endeavor was soon to be fostered by the Department of Political Science and the Institute for Political Research at the University of Bucharest. Teaching and research are undertaken here in an eclectic theoretical framework that includes mainly historical approaches, neo-institutionalism, systems theory, and rational-choice theory. Those with this tendency are usually inclined to develop teaching methods and address topics that work out and ponder the respective merits of American formal analysis of politics, German critical theory, French political sociology, and Italian theoretical approaches. Their basic assumption is that such a balanced and manifold academic training, convergent with a plurality of political science research standards, will eventually yield an intellectual overspill effect when dispensed to several generations of graduate and undergraduate students. They withstand any form of *pensée unique* in political science that would mimic the late scientific socialism's ambition to be the one and only canonical and officially approved science of politics. In addition, by themselves, the researchers affiliated with the Department of Political Science at the University of Bucharest (Daniel Barbu, the late Alexandru Duțu, Alexandra Ionescu, Filon Morar, Dan Pavel, Cristian Preda, Sorin Gabriel Sebe, Stelian Tănase, Laurențiu Vlad, George Voicu) write more than 60% of Romania's books and articles on political science.

Associated with this tendency is the work of some sociologists who tried to develop a Romanian model for the study of social capital. Focused on transition, the contributions of Dumitru Sandu from the Department of Sociology of the University of Bucharest (Sandu, 1996, 1999) as well as the teamwork of a group of young scholars (Berevoiescu 1999) so far represent the paramount pieces of solid empirical research that involves political values and behavior.

In fact, it might be alleged that the closer a political science department stands to sociology, the more developed its quantitative research. This general remark is particularly true for the Department of Political Science and Public Administration of Cluj, which over time has demonstrated the steadiest commitment to the formal methods of political analysis, conducted by a well-structured research group run by Gabriel Bădescu (co-author in Rotariu, 1999). The University of Bucharest department harbors some highly theoretical formal research, due to its policy of recruiting both sociologists and mathematicians (Sebe, 2001).

The survivors of the Party Political Academy largely embody the second trend, harbored by the National School of Political Studies and Public Administration and the Institute of Political Sciences and International Relations. Incidentally, the partition of the Party Academy into a research outfit and a teaching establishment is meaningful for the evolution of one communist network in a democratic environment. The less influential representatives of scientific socialism

were assigned the “theoretical” mission of further promoting the nationalist ideology that underscored the last decade of totalitarianism. Meanwhile, the better-connected members of the network were given the more pragmatic task of taking over the market of political and civil service careers. They were soon joined by a number of junior scholars who are as wedded as their seniors to the heteronomy of politics, which they tend to understand exclusively in terms of public choice, government performance, and policies of development or the lack of them.

A substantiating example of this unwillingness to attribute a theoretical identity to politics is offered by the books written by the leading instructors of the School (Pasti, 1995; Pasti, Miroiu, and Codiță, 1997). Such books make practically no reference to the major findings and authors of political science, and they candidly ignore the rules and methods of scientific research and writing. It is no accident that they even fall behind the developmental ideology of the late 1960s and the early 1970s, driven as they are by a vernacular and somewhat unconscious Marxism, impurely connected to the clerical and sometimes resourceful Marxism of their predecessors. In this capacity, they represent what might be considered a drift that emulates a local tradition, as opposed to the radical tendency that does not acknowledge an overall Romanian intellectual legacy, but only appreciation of some individual achievements in the science of politics.

Continuity and strategic intent, however, do not ensure performance, at least for research. Nor do the tactics of denial. Very much like their fellow successors of the Communist Party in the governmental and political realms, the core members of this network are, both individually and as a group, subject to what may be called a “the-emperor-is-naked” syndrome. Indeed, for reasons of democratic appropriateness, they typically reject, resent, and try to deter any reference to their pre-1989 intellectual roots and institutional affiliations. One of the most elusive paradoxes of the Romanian political and academic arenas is that, by covering up their not so remote past, the former ideological craftsmen of state socialism are the first to imply that communism does not deserve examination. Because, if the emperor were handsome, who would be bothered that he came out naked from totalitarianism?

Finally, the third major orientation surrenders itself to a form of empirical poverty. It indulges in polls, polls commentaries, and predictions, rather than proper research. Answers are usually given in the absence of any theoretical questions, though empirical social inquiry is supposed to secrete normative judgments. Nevertheless, the most popular and handy instrument in the study of politics has become the opinion survey. Regardless of any utility it might have, such an instrument can provide only shallow accounts of politically relevant dispositions. All the same, the polltakers have become the pundits of Romanian politics and of its certified interpretation. They are looked up to by politicians and the media, and typically look down on academic political scientists, whom they consider inexperienced intellectuals cut off from reality.

There are several Romanian poll firms currently engaged in surveys, some of them conducting part of their investigations in the framework and under the supervision of the New Democracies Barometer coordinated by the Paul Lazarsfeld Society in Vienna. The most reliable of these firms seems to be the Romanian Institute for Public Opinion Survey (IRSOP), chaired by Petre Datculescu and dominant in the early 1990s (Datculescu, 1999). Today, it shares the market with the Center for Urban Sociology (CURS), run by Dorel Abraham; the Center for Political Studies and Comparative Analysis of Dorel Șandor (CPSCA); the Institute for Marketing and Surveys (IMAS), owned by Alin Teodorescu and Călin Anastasiu; and a newcomer, MetroMediaTransilvania. The last firm deserves a cautionary mention, because, after constantly and aggressively predicting the overwhelming victory of the Social Democratic Party in the 2000 elections, its chief executive officer, Vasile Dîncu, a member of the faculty of sociology of the University of Cluj, became that government’s cabinet minister for Public Information. The accuracy of the polls is occasionally questioned, because word and some circumstantial proof of collusion with governmental or partisan sponsors has come out in the recent years.

This orientation is maintained not only by numerous commercial pollsters, but also by quite a large population of self- or media-appointed “political analysts”. Indeed, those who dedicate

themselves to micro-political analysis, i.e., to current affairs and political anecdote, are often considered and always consider themselves competent scholars of politics. Renowned “political analysts” are usually only those who dedicate themselves to interpreting opinion polls, who construe for the public the outcome of recent elections, who comment on the latest political events, who seem to elucidate the behind-the-scenes connections between political parties, politicians, and big business, who bring to light corruption cases, and who denounce the abuses of the authorities and the civil service. The reputation of being a “political analyst” is in most cases earned by the fiction writer, the journalist, the essayist, and more rarely the sociologist who leaks to the media some crumbs of theoretical or empirical knowledge, especially if he or she does so in a vivid manner.

#### 4. Thematic orientation and funding

So it is easy to feel dismay about the overall quality of Romanian political analysis. For running through it is a dangerous confounding of politics as the government of people with economy as the administration of things. Indeed, there is clear evidence of the suborning – in a post-Marxist logic – of political science by the language of economics, which has largely driven out the language of politics itself and in particular the language of constitutionalism. The sources and purposes of politics are thus neglected in favor of listing more directly discernible trends of public opinion and political behavior. That is, in favor of the political regime itself, since partisan mobilization, party competition, and electoral participation are fully authorized modes of conduct, utilized by the State to enforce its legitimacy. So political science does not provide an appraisal of the post-communist body politic in terms of legitimacy, social divisions, and conflicts of meanings, but is complacent about what the system licenses its citizens to choose, believe, and even complain about or stand against.

As a result, many observers of electoral processes and the party system are inclined to acknowledge by omission that parties neither have to identify politically and ethically desirable avenues of social change nor have to organize consent through deconstructing the mythology of the State (Mihuț, 1994; Radu, Radu, and Porumb, 1995; Radu, 2000); parties are viewed as merely political equivalents of companies offering policy products and competing for voters’ preferences within an approved framework (Popescu, 1997; Bulai, 1999; Mungiu-Pippidi, 2001). By the same token, methodological uniqueness is sometimes bestowed upon empirical social inquiry, which in most cases is inspired by a belated and trivial behaviorism. This emphasis on the outcomes of policies and political choices, rather than on the process that makes decision-making itself possible, leads to an understanding of political science as a consumer of current politics, rather than a critic of the body politic and its covenants. This brand of political science claims to follow what it considers to be the mainstream canon of public choice studies, discarding from the outset the troublesome fact that the public spheres and the choices they uphold and recognize may not be alike in North America, Western Europe, and Romania. Furthermore, it takes pride in being a-theoretical and value-free, because it has no plan to develop any concept of what post-communist society really is or should be. Politics is inspected very much as if, when dealing with a text, one merely had to identify the alphabet it is written in and provide a graphological evaluation, without any reference to its language and content.

Undeniably, it might be countered that there are, after all, Romanian students of elections and political parties concerned more with the nature of the political system than with its sheer operations. And indeed there are some who refuse an insidiously post-scientific-socialism drawback of critical thinking and who do believe that politics, rather than responding to contingent popular wants, should promote and enforce rights. Still, the first attempt to theorize the structure and functions of partisanship in a democratic society pays little heed to comparative evidence and largely disregards the enormous body of literature devoted to political parties (Voicu, 1997). However, more recent studies (Morar 2000, 2001a; Preda, 2001) shed fresh and powerful light on

the origins, electoral mechanics, and political rationale of the post-communist Romanian party system.

Post-communism is at any rate and not unexpectedly one of the favorite topics of political prose. Nonetheless, transition to democracy understood in a counter-narrative manner as a political process through which society mirrors its own divisions and conflicts have hardly ever received an apposite treatment in political science as such (Barbu, 1999). Instead, the most-treated topic by far is political communication as a mobilization device in electoral campaigns and beyond (Mungiu, 1995; Drăgan, 1998; Beciu, 2000). So far, the revolution as a path to democracy has been conceived in an oversimplifying manner that fails to capture its full meaning for the social sciences (Stănciugelu, 1998). Hitherto, more detailed issues of transition and democratization have scarcely been identified, let alone addressed.

One reason for this looms larger than any other. When the study of post-communism is stripped of its “current affairs” features and analyses, it has no explored ground to rest on. As a tradition of thinking and as a historical experience, research on Romanian politics is at its very beginnings. Only two major topics seem to have been explored so far: on the one hand, the foundations of modern Romanian political culture (Duțu, 1998b; Barbu, 2001a); on the other hand, political and constitutional nationalism and the making of Romanian national identity. Nationalism, construed as a mainstream political culture opposed to the intricate boost of democratic values, is central to the public debate (Roth, 1999), since it seems to be more impervious to change than any form of political tenet (Barbu, 2001b). Hence, nationalism, in its various embodiments and manifestations, is critically and systematically dismantled from an entangled multicultural, pluralist, and human rights perspective (Pavel, 1995, Voicu, 2001). A genuine liberal and coherent theoretical inquiry into Romanian nationalism is also to be noted (Preda, 1998, 1999).

In fact, it is probably safe to say that the most substantive achievements of Romanian political science are to be found in the field of political theory. But even in this respect, not all pieces of research are created equal. The group of authors linked to the Institute of Social Theory may be prolific, but their books are too methodologically confused and ideologically incongruous to rely upon (e.g. Cioabă, 1995; Nica, 1998). By contrast, well-defended essays on the purposes and limits of political thinking (Carpinschi, 1995; Miroiu, 1998) or on the conceptual junctures of political science (Mihuț, 1996) warrant the thoughtful attention of academics, while a more general audience will profit from timely reviews of authoritative Western literature on broad topics such as conservatism or liberalism (Iliescu, 1994, 1998). Furthermore, a cogent and original interpretation of the conditions of liberty in political society, based on a close and critical reading of the liberal tradition, promises to prevail (Crăiuțu, 1998; Preda, 2000), since it converges with some valuable contributions to the theory of political representation (Morar, 2001b), to the interpretation of the social contract theories (Avramescu, 1998), and to the history of Romanian political thought (Ionescu, 2001).

It would be improper to rest the case without recognizing that a sizeable share of political research remains unaccounted for, dissolved as it is in consulting reports and policy papers. Regarding public choice, think tanks are perhaps the most obvious and rewarding experience in institutional design undertaken after 1989. The spearhead of them all is the Center for Political Studies and Comparative Analysis (CPSCA), established in 1992 by Dorel Șandor, a senior advisor to the first post-communist prime minister. The second to appear was the Romanian Academic Society (SAR), created by Alina Mungiu in 1996. Stelian Tănase, with his apparently stillborn Institute for Political and Economic Research, followed their example less effectively in 1998. What is particular about these NGOs is that, with the notable exception of the Open Society Institute, they receive their funding predominantly from public agencies: governmental commissions when the government is politically friendly, as well as PHARE, USAID, UNDP, World Bank programs, and the like.

Whether funded by universities, academic institutes, or think tanks, political science research relies by and large on public funding, Romanian or not. The principal sponsor is the Ministry of Education and Research, but apart from special allowances occasionally granted to privileged institutions like the National School of Political Studies and Public Administration<sup>9</sup>, the subsidies cover only the faculty's emoluments. Thus, and to put together an appropriate teaching or research project, each department and center has had to identify and raise supplementary financing. For instance, the Department of Political Science at the University Babeş-Bolyai of Cluj-Napoca might have been less mature and westernized were it not for the lasting support of the International Research and Exchanges Board (IREX). And the Department of Political Science at the University of Bucharest was and still is largely backed by the *Agence Universitaire Francophone* (AUF), while two major awards from the World Bank and the USAID currently fund its Institute for Political Research.

Three observations can be made about the impact of funding on the content of the projects sponsored and the choice of research themes. First, as of 1995, the Ministry of Education and Research duly observes academic autonomy and refrains from any involvement in the composition of academic programs and curricula. Second, university departments normally compete for international grants with a clear view to strengthen, develop, and diversify undertakings of their own choice and within an already confirmed area of competence. Classified as governmental organizations, their proposals are often discarded from the outset. As a result, their opportunities are limited, but their research can focus on matters at hand. Third, NGOs may be comparatively better off with respect to funding, but they surely are less coherent in their research orientations, for they depend on their subsidizers' agenda, which more often than not dictates the thematic bearings of the inquiry itself. As a consequence, a handful of researchers are compelled to shift from country risk assessments to shadow economy surveys, from European integration topics to civil society issues, or from the reform of the electoral system to security and stability in the Balkans. Typically, the research goes wherever the money tells it to go.

## 5. Public space and academic debates

Clearly, these unprecedented developments amount to the emergence of a scale of organization of political science far removed from the nation-building and state control obsessions that underpinned both pre-communist social thinking and scientific socialism. For the new framework of teaching and research rapidly increased the public visibility of political science. Of course, if there is a morality of science, this newly acquired reputation should not be measured according to the self-assessment of many a political commentator, but ought to be consistent with the quality and meaning of those publications that meet the standards of a genuine and internationally recognizable science of politics.

Editorial policies aimed at the dissemination of political science in academia and the general public fall into five categories: the recovery of a Romanian tradition of social and political thinking; the translation of classic works of political philosophy and theory; the editing of handbooks; the promotion of Romanian authors; and the publishing of specialized journals. The most active such publishing houses are Nemira, Humanitas, and All (in Bucharest) and Polirom and Institutul European (in Iași). All these private companies issue series devoted to political science, the most profuse being Nemira's *Societatea politică* (The Political Society) – with forty books published over the last four years – edited by Cristian Preda.

A serious effort was made to recall several pre-communist Romanian authors from oblivion or denial. Both social-liberal theoreticians (Constantin Stere, Virgil Madgearu, Ștefan Zeletin) and reactionary thinkers (Constantin Rădulescu-Motru, Mihail Manoilescu) found a renewed place in the public sphere, and their writings are increasingly regarded as landmarks of a still scarcely explored history of Romanian political ideas.

Some classics of political philosophy, including Locke's *Two Treatises of Government* and Tocqueville's *Democracy in America*, were translated into Romanian for the first time. Moreover, a whole company of political thinkers appeal to the Romanian public in its own language: Karl Popper, Norberto Bobbio, Leo Strauss, Isaiah Berlin, Hannah Arendt, Albert O. Hirschman, Friedrich von Hayek, Giovanni Sartori, Ralf Dahrendorf, Robert Dahl, and Jürgen Habermas.

Somewhat less thriving was the handbook endeavor. Standing alongside a thoughtful and seriously assembled manual of formal methods in the social sciences (Rotariu, 1999) and a useful but unfinished treatise on political science (Carpinschi, Bocancea, 1998), which may serve not only as a good introduction for the beginning student, but also as a review for those reasonably familiar with the field, are a couple of decent histories of political ideas (Duțu, 1998a; Goian, 2001). Finally, a rather uneven textbook of political doctrines, purportedly confronting the "universal" concepts with their Romanian incarnations (Mungiu-Pippidi, 1998), could have been a vastly different and better achievement if the editor had done a better job on the scope, direction, and selection of contributors<sup>10</sup>.

The two dictionaries of "essential" political writings that were recently published fell equally slightly short of their purpose, despite the quality of several particular entries and the knowledgeable ability of many contributors. Although the objective and framework of such undertakings make sense intuitively, the different pieces in these works are not cogently tied together, and both volumes are padded with material that any informed reader will find irrelevant. The result is a lack of theoretical outlook and political insight in the final product, due to the poor editorial work done either by an inexpert graduate student (Ștefan-Scalat, 2000) or even by some members of the Romanian Academy (Surdu, Vlăduțescu, and Boboc, 2001).

Even if the publishing houses welcome almost any original productions by the Romanian authors who claim to write within the borders, porous as they may be, of political science, this liberality poses risks. The various university presses are underfinanced and have no national distribution, so most of the burden rests on market-oriented editors. Driven by commercial interests, they usually discourage the submission of lengthy manuscripts loaded with scholarly notes, references, and indices. They typically prefer to promote authors already present in the public mind for having been visible in politics, the media, or, as is often the case, in both. Thus, the public at large takes for reliable political scientists prolific freelancers like Silviu Brucan, a journalist of the militant years of totalitarianism and a last-minute dissident who ventured to solve in 136 pages all the questions of social change in Russia and Eastern Europe (Brucan, 1998), even though such best-selling authors have nothing to do with the rules basic to any kind of scientific research.

Certainly, in any culture there is a venue and perhaps a valid mission for commentators of current affairs and for political essayists – provided that there is also a position and an audience for political scientists and their scholarly production, which rarely seeks huge popularity. Yet, Romanian public debate echoes mainly books written by political insiders, research itself being regarded as an unredeemable enterprise undertaken by outsider intellectuals whose understanding of the political arena and stakes is purely abstract. Thus, many political scientists are willing to indulge the public's expectations and hide their scholarly work behind a more politically committed style (Pavel, 1998). Some even lose interest in any form of theoretical perspective or empirical investigation (Tănase, 1996). A dominant idiom of current affairs, which saps any ambition of political thinking, has thus become the habitual dialect not only of politicians and journalists, but also of many a political scientist. Consequently, political journalism stands out as a clear and present danger to Romanian would-be political science, because it does what a science would never do: it discloses, adjudicates, instructs, indulges in casual predictions, has no intellectual doubts whatsoever, ignores methodological deadlocks, and conveniently fits received wisdom. Political prose and political science have become hopelessly embroiled and confused.

This account would not be complete without mention of the few books written directly in international languages (French and English) by a small number of Romanian political scientists.

The topics addressed by these authors range from the sources of Romanian political culture (Duțu, 1998b; Barbu, 1998; Vlad, 1999) to political theory (Preda, 2000; Ionescu, 2001) and, of course, to democratic transition and consolidation (Bocancea, 1998; Morar, 2000). Three translations, unfortunately issued by marginal publishers, should also be noted (Pasti, 1995; Mungiu, 1995; Ornea, 1999), since they may be instrumental in promoting topics related to Romanian politics in the international arena.

Yet, since March 2001, Romanian research in political science is epitomized by the journal *Studia Politica. Romanian Political Science Review*, which is published quarterly – in English, French, German, Italian, and Romanian – by the Institute for Political Research at the University of Bucharest and printed by Meridiane Publishing House. Daniel Barbu, Cristian Preda and Alexandra Ionescu edit the journal under the auspices of an advisory board that includes Norberto Bobbio, Hans-Dieter Klingemann, Pierre Manent, Gianfranco Pasquino, Giovanni Sartori, Charles Taylor, and many other prominent political scientists. Believing that ideas do matter, the editors share a common commitment as intellectuals and scholars to try to shed light on the major political problems facing Romania and to revisit, after the demise of the totalitarian experience, the very foundations of democratic ideals and procedures. They think of the journal as a challenge and a mandate to be involved in fundamental important contemporary issues not only of the democratization of Romania's polity and politics, but also of the "great transformation" that is taking place in Central and Eastern Europe. The main topics targeted so far are the theory of democracy, the history of Romanian political thought, radical politics, and the cultures of nationalism and citizenship. The journal submits all articles to a refereeing process and has an extensive section of book reviews, both novelties in the Romanian political science setting.

The Department of Political Science at the University Babeș-Bolyai of Cluj-Napoca has published annually since 1996 *Studia Universitatis Babeș-Bolyai. Politica*, which includes mainly papers presented to seminars and conferences. The outlet of the Institute of Social Theory of the Romanian Academy is *Revista de Teorie Socială* (The Journal of Social Theory), which, suitably enough, is never quoted except by its own editors and authors, who write so far outside the rules of social research that is obvious they never possessed a reliable social science to think within. Yet, there are other journals issued by various Institutes of the Romanian Academy that are worthy of use by political scientists. The most helpful in this respect are *Revista Română de Sociologie* (The Romanian Journal of Sociology) and *Arhivele Totalitarismului* (The Archives of Totalitarianism). Two other academic journals should not pass unnoticed, since they provide valuable tools for political scientists: *Revista de Cercetări Sociale* (The Journal of Social Research) and *Sociologie Românească* (Romanian Sociology).

Several other journals and magazines address issues in political science, but since they are edited by private organizations, their academic legitimacy is precarious; they do not print peer-reviewed articles and are often behind schedule. Among them, special mention is due *Sfera Politicii* (The Sphere of Politics), a political magazine edited by Stelian Tănase since 1992. The outlet does not fulfill most academic standards, but for many years, before plunging into current journalism, it was the only publication at hand for many political scientists. Noteworthy are also: *Polis. Revistă de științe politice* (Polis. Journal of Political Sciences), published by a poll firm (IMAS) since 1994 and devoted more and more to translating articles by prominent international scholars into Romanian; *Revista Română de Științe Politice* (Romanian Journal of Political Science), published by a think tank (SAR), printing merely institutional reports and apparently vanishing after the first issues; and *The Romanian Journal of Politics and Society*, recently edited in English by the Civic Education Project with the intent of promoting papers written by junior researchers. Some of these journals – linked to institutions entirely dependent upon their initiators' public relations skills – are likely to succumb not only to a shortage of funding, but also to the fallacy of usefulness.

Though pregnant with the possibility of fair competition and confrontation among theoretical orientations, methods, and approaches, such an unmatched expansion of publications and research



tools has not generated a reapportionment of public interest in political works according to the radical shifts in the scholarly population that occurred after 1989. Why has this not happened? The cause may be similar to the reason why communist-successor politicians are still in command of the governmental sphere. Because a new social contract has not been agreed upon after the breakdown of state socialism, mainstream political science remains to a large extent captive to the politics it is its mission to consider, i.e., to the outwardly reconstructed political order that defines the public sphere at large.

## 6. Views on further development

It is therefore no coincidence that the domestic asymmetry between the institutions of change and those of continuity is overturned in the international setting. Suffice it to say that the European Commission's General Directorate for Education assigned to the Department of Political Science at the University of Bucharest the task of coordinating the consolidation of political science as a new discipline of study in Romanian universities. Between 1995 and 1998, a Joint European Tempus Project with funds exceeding 500,000 € allowed the Universities of Bucharest, Cluj-Napoca, and Iași to play an internationally recognized leading role in the framing of academic political science in Romania. Each of these institutions then became able to take full advantage of the opportunities offered by the Socrates-Erasmus program for faculty and student exchanges as well as for research partnerships. Altogether, they signed almost one hundred institutional contracts with Western European universities.

Nevertheless, it looks as if they are more eager to manage their respective international contacts than to create for their own use a steadily functioning Romanian research network. Characteristically, they relate to each other primarily when involved in the same European program. For a few years in the late 1990s, the University of Cluj organized each fall a national conference on political science, but attendance never actually comprehensively covered all institutions and orientations. Nor was the European credit transfer system adopted by all of them as of 1998, a real incentive to agree upon common curricular standards, or any program to exchange students among themselves.

A decisive question about students is pending: since 1995, the several Romanian departments of political science together fed into the job market almost one thousand graduates of political science. What has become of them? A tentative survey conducted by a team from the University of Bucharest found that 20% of the graduates were offered academic positions in the higher education and research institutions or are enrolled in graduate programs in Romania or abroad. Most of those who continue their studies abroad, particularly in American universities, will not come back if they find a career opportunity in the host country. 40% work as experts or civil servants in central public institutions (mainly the Presidency, the Parliament, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of Defense, the Ministry of Justice, the Governmental Department of Public Information, the National Bank of Romania, etc.) or, albeit to a lesser extent, in local government (city halls, local councils, and the like). 35% work in the private sector (chiefly the mass media, but also the capital market or financial and legal audit offices). Last, 5% work as consultants within various political parties. So far, the market has been able to absorb and recognize the utility of young political scientists. Because their number will increase dramatically over the next years, the high enrollment rate in political science departments will be cause for some concern.

This escalation of the student population is not innocent, but has a number of calculating motives. First, since 1999, the Ministry of Education and Research finances the departments according to the number of students they currently enroll. "The more, the wealthier" could therefore be the new motto of Romanian higher education. Second, there are on average and in any given case five times more candidates than places available in the political science departments,

generous as they may be in their recruiting policies. For a political science education is generally considered a good route to an important appointed or elected position in public service.

Romanian politics itself is more about who governs and how than why and to what end. It follows naturally that political science is commonly understood as a study of rule, apprehended as dominion rather than as norm. Notably enough, the first attempt to describe the landscape of post-communist Romanian political science (Stan, 1999) paid, maybe deservedly, more attention to power brokerage and the distribution of resources within academic and para-academic circles than to the quality and capability of research. This is because institutionalized Romanian political science is more about control, ranking, and public recognition than about scientific findings able to advance our understanding of Romania's politics and polity. For that matter, Romanian political scientists of any intellectual persuasion tend to be more involved in the politics of their discipline than in disciplining the political and scientific legacy they are supposed to think about and upgrade.

To cut a long story short, there seem to be two main reasons why Romanian political science is so slow in coming of age.

On the one hand, the institutions of continuity had and still have privileged access to public resources (funding, locals, equipment, political support). They perpetuate an approach to politics and the political largely indebted to nationalism and vulgar Marxism, and they are job-market oriented. Thus, the three universities, Bucharest, Babeş-Bolyai of Cluj, and Iaşi, which bear the burden of change, are frequently confronted with survival problems and very scarce funding for quantitative research. In fact, the political environment hardly accepts the very idea of research in political science. Beyond institutional continuity, the main heritage of the communist era may lie in the way politics is conceived: not as a legitimate object of empirical investigation and theoretical exploration, but as a series of heterogeneous events to be construed from an economic perspective. I have already emphasized how great a toll the language and reasoning of economics has taken on political argument. And this is not a mere academic worry. Indeed, in post-communist politics, the new "capitalist" superstructure (to reverse Marx's terminology) is credited at face value, while few are ready to invest in a rights-entrenched political infrastructure able to support the unprecedented dynamics of social change.

On the other hand, the pre-communist condition of political science seems to be reactivated: its legitimacy is challenged both by sociology (which claims a monopoly on empirical research on society) and by public law (whose ambition is to be the only true science of the State). Nor is that all. As in the 1920s and the 1930s, the discourse on politics runs the risk of being hijacked by freelance political journalism, which is haunted by the ambition to set the rules and the language of political analysis. Perhaps the greatest hazard for Romanian political science is to draw on and reinforce the dominant discourse of society and polity, instead of providing a critical theory of politics. Because, as Max Weber famously argued<sup>11</sup>, a social science should rather recognize inconvenient facts, meaning those that controvert comfortably established certainties, including its own.

On balance, the Romanian science of politics suffers from a number of defects, which undermine its scientific credentials and academic integrity: the failure to eliminate inadequate theory, terminological confusion, an excess of descriptivism and current-affairism, and the temptation to resort to ideological intimidation. These pathologies are not only germane to the maladies that afflicted the larger body of social sciences twenty years ago<sup>12</sup>, they also mimic the very diseases of post-communist politics. For Romanian political science turns out to be consistent with the professed capitalist and democratic polity it has the mission to encompass and probe: it still remains an oxymoron.

- 1 Theodore J. Lowi, "The State in Political Science: How We Become What We Study", in: *American Political Science Review*, 86, no. 1, 1992, 1-7.
- 2 E.g. Pierre Favre, "Histoire de la science politique", in: Madeleine Grawitz and Jean Leca, editors, *Traité de science politique*, I, Paris: PUF, 1985, p. 4.
- 3 This form has obvious interdisciplinary and eclectic connotations and could be explained in two ways: either as an abbreviation of the "political and social sciences" of the pre-1989 period, or as an acknowledgement that the label of the study of politics covers a broad association of disciplines, international relations being the most valued. Nevertheless, international relations are explicitly not taken into account in this survey, since in Romania they tend to form a self-sufficient and separate sub-discipline in terms of research teams, methods, and objectives.
- 4 Giovanni Sartori, "From the Sociology of Politics to Political Sociology", in: Seymour M. Lipset, editor, *Politics and Social Sciences*, New York: Oxford University Press, 1969: 65-100.
- 5 Thomas S. Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1962: 10-13.
- 6 I borrow these notions and their meaning from Giovanni Sartori, "Concept Misformation in Comparative Politics", in: *American Political Science Review*, LXIV, no. 4, 1970: 1033-1053.
- 7 In approximating the two paradigms, I have followed the systematization of Andrew C. Janos, *Politics and Paradigms. Changing Theories of Change in Social Sciences*, Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1986.
- 8 To this day, the Romanian Association of Political Science is among the "living dead", i.e., it nominally exists, but has no activity. In 1999, a group of junior faculty and students from the Department of Political Science at the University of Bucharest Romanian Society of Political Science.
- 9 A classic example is the singular augmentation of the National School's patrimony by the Social Democracy Party government through an executive order issued in November 1996, after the party had lost the elections and was waiting for a new cabinet to take over.
- 10 Since the discipline has an optional place in the national high school curriculum, the same editor coordinated a political science manual for high schools published in 2000 by Polirom of Iași.
- 11 Max Weber, "Science as a Vocation", in: H. H. Gerth and C. W. Mills, editors and translators, *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology*, New York: Oxford University Press, 1958: 147.
- 12 Hubert Blalock, *Basic Dilemmas in the Social Sciences*, Beverly Hill, Calif.: Sage Publications, 1984.

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