INSIDE THE PYRAMID OF POWER
THE EVOLUTION OF STRATEGIC ELITES IN POST-COMMUNIST ROMANIA

by

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ABSTRACT

This research project examines the role of strategic elites in the transitional environment of post-communist Romania. The project addresses the evolving values of Romania's decision-makers, both historically and comparatively; the composition of strategic elites both before and after 1989; and their relationships and organization. Comparative studies of post-communist elites have revealed that Romania exhibits some features in common with other Eastern European transitional regimes, but also some unusual and unique, patterns of elite recruitment, values, and interaction. The main objective of this project is to carry out a configurative case study of Romanian elites – in the context of Eastern and Central European post-communist elite development – and to determine whether the Romanian case can shed light on the general features of post-communist elite development. The ongoing consequences of elite development for Romania's transition form the focus of the concluding section, which assesses elite-driven implications for the country's pluralist and European projects.

Keywords: Romania, strategic elites, transition, political class, Eastern Europe.

DEDICATION

Pentru Mama, Kondi, si Gabi, pentru ca ati crezut in mine.

To my mother, my grandmother, and my brother, with love.

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LIST OF TABLES

LIST OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

DA = Dreptate si Adevar (The Justice and Truth Alliance, formed of the National Liberal Party and the Democratic Party); the basis of the current ruling coalition

CDR = Conventia Democrata Romana (The Romanian Democratic Convention)

CNI = Comunitatea Nationala de Informatii (National Information Community)

CSM = Consiliul Superior al Magistraturii (The Magistrate Superior Council)

EU = European Union

FSN = Frontul Salvarii Nationale (The National Salvation Front)

GDS = Grupul pentru Dialog Social (The Social Dialog Group)

PC = Partidul Conservator (The Conservative Party, formerly the Romanian Humanistic Party or PUR, and member of the ruling coalition)

PCR = Partidul Comunist Roman (The Romanian Communist Party)

PD = Partidul Democrat (The Democratic Party)

PDSR = Partidul Democrat Social Roman (The Romanian Democrat Social Party)

PNL = Partidul National Liberal (The National Liberal Party)

PNT = Partidul National Taranesc (National Peasant Party)

PNTCD = Partidul National Taranesc Crestin si Democrat (The Christian-Democratic National Peasant Party)

PRM = Partidul Romania Mare (The Greater Romania Party)

PSD = Partidul Social-Democrat (The Social Democratic Party)

SRI = Serviciul Roman de Informatii (The Romanian Information Service)

UDMR = Uniunea Democrata a Maghiarilor din Romania (The Democratic Union of Hungarians in Romania)

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 The Role of Agency in Transitional Development

Social scientists have been quite divided in their views when it comes to studying post-communist countries in Eastern Europe. Some analysts focus on how little progress has been achieved during the last fifteen years, deploring the facade democratic institutions, the theft of reform by powerful vested interests, the political indifference of the citizens, and the lack of a democratic political culture. Other observers emphasize how far along these new-born democracies have come, as demonstrated by free, competitive elections, the consolidation of the party systems, the development of markets and capitalist structures, and perhaps most importantly, the role of the European Union. Both sides of the debate capture important parts of the processes undergoing in Eastern Europe, yet it remains difficult to reconcile the evident progress with the serious drawbacks. What accounts for these opposing views, and how is the debate likely to evolve in the future? These broad questions shape many of the research topics that have preoccupied scholars of Eastern Europe in recent years, for example, concerning economic development and marketization, the evolution of political pluralism, political culture and civic cohesion, social transformation, cultural revival, and overall assessments that include most of the preceding factors.

In a transitional environment like the one in Eastern Europe, all these research interests can be framed within the "agency versus institutions" theoretical debate. This project begins by positing that the role of agency, as represented by strategic elite groups, in shaping all of the above-mentioned processes, is paramount, as top decision-making remains largely unchecked by domestic institutional barriers and only partially subject to external pressures. Given the weakness of formal institutions, the circumstances of regime changes, and the dynamics of power, strategic power groups are successfully operating within *informal* institutions, concentrating around a personality-leader and assuming complementary group roles.[1] These

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1 Author Sorin Adam Matei makes a compelling argument for the prevalence of what he calls "para-modern prestige groups" within Romanian intellectual elites. See Sorin Adam Matei, *Boierii Mintii: Intelectualii Romani intre grupurile de prestigiu si piata libera a ideilor* (Bucharest: Compania, 2004).This project will extend his concept to strategic elite groups that wield the greatest power in Romania's transition.

strategic elites permeate all interrelated aspects of transition, starting from political transformations, but extending to fundamental economic and social changes.

This project focuses on examining the role and importance of strategic power groups in the transitional environment of post-communist Romania. Comparative studies of Eastern European post-communist elites[2] have revealed that Romania exhibits some common, but also some unusual and unique, patterns of elite recruitment, values, and interaction. Nevertheless, it should be emphasized that the main objective of this project is to analyze Romania as a configurative case study. Thus, the project will examine Romania's strategic elites as they have evolved during the country's historical process of independence and state building, and, most importantly, as they now stand in relation to Romania's transition towards pluralism and membership in the European Union. It also attempts to determine whether the Romanian case can shed light on the general features of post-communist elite development.

During regime changes such as the one Romania and the whole of Eastern Europe have experienced during the past fifteen years, strategic power groups often operate outside the formal institutional framework. Therefore, examining these groups and their role in transition means looking beyond visible political elites; in addition to party elites, members of parliament, and governmental representatives, strategic elites also include major players in non-political structures and covert decision-makers at the top of the power pyramid.[3]

The underlying focus of this project is to determine the role played by both visible and relatively non-transparent strategic elites in determining Romania's development. The study will examine the values and organization of elites, as well as their relationship to informal institutions, behaviour, and goals. A typology of strategic groups in Romania will be outlined, highlighting not only the power transformations that have occurred since 1989, but also the long-term elite

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2 Although a lot of these studies focus on the Slavic countries in Central and Eastern Europe, therefore excluding Romania, more recent work is taking the non-Slavic country into account. Examples of the former include: Mattei Dogan and John Higley (eds) *Elites, Crises, and the Origins of Regimes* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 1998); John Higley and Gyorgy Lengyel, (eds) *Elites after State Socialism: Theories and Analysis* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2000); and John Higley, Jan Pakulski and Wlodzimierz Wesolowski (eds) *Post-Communist Elites and Democracy in Eastern Europe* (London: Macmillan Press, 1998). Some examples of comparative studies that include Romania are: Andras Bozoki and John T. Ishiyama (eds) *The Communist Successor Parties of Central and Eastern Europe* (Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe, 2002); Andras Bozoki, ed., *Intellectuals and Politics in Central Europe* (Budapest: Central European University Press, 1999); and Valerie Bunce, "Comparative Democratization: Big and Bounded Generalizations," *Comparative Political Studies*, Vol.33, no. 6/7 (2000): 703-734.

3 Andrei Stoiciu makes a similar point when explaining his approach to the study of Romanian elites. See Andrei Stoiciu, *Enigmes de la Seduction Politique: Les Elites Roumaines entre 1989 et 1999* (Montreal: Humanitas, 2000). His work, as well as the extensive research conducive to the book, represent an important base for the current project.

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assessing its strength.[10] These factors may be institutional (democratic, transparent institutions), attitudinal (democratic political culture, a vibrant civil society), structural—communist and even pre-communist continuities, and political leadership—the features and actions of strategic elites. In other words, as Valerie Bunce contends,

> if political leaders, for various reasons, are understood to be the founders of democracy, then they also often function, after that initial breakthrough, as its sustainers or its underminers...However, there is nonetheless a recognition that, once founded, the course of democracy depends on a complex array of factors, only one of which involves elites, their attitudes, and their behavior.[11]

To analyze the complexity of factors that play a role in post-communist democratizations is beyond the scope of this project. Moreover, democratization is only one of many lengthy, complicated processes experienced by post-communist countries. Other, enormous ongoing challenges include economic reform and modernization, institutional reform, social restructuring, changes in political culture and civil society, and European Union integration. Although largely connected to the process of democratic transformation, these phenomena have their own agenda and often make for more pressing public needs. Conversely, strategic elites, through their monopoly as the countries' power nuclei, play a key role in the process of democratization, but also in the process of economic reform (for example, in the growth of privately-owned businesses at the expense of those publicly owned, in the process of income redistribution, and dealing with inequality), institutional restructuring (by controlling the mechanisms of judicial reform and constitutional changes), and European integration (diplomacy, transforming EU goals and directives into publicly digestible information). Such an extensive involvement in key transitional processes warrants a careful look at the characteristics and actions of strategic elites, with the goal of understanding their agenda and the countries' prospects in light of elite priorities and constraints.

Focusing on Romanian strategic elites, this project recognizes the importance of placing them in a proper comparative context. Despite an obvious comparative need to find commonalities and generalizations across cases, such factors should be carefully chosen and

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10 Several theorists of democracy, among them Samuel Huntington, Joseph Schumpeter, and Adam Przeworski, adhere by a minimalist standard of democracy, whereby democracy is given by consecutive free elections. See Huntington, *op cit*, Schumpeter, *op cit*, and Adam Przeworski, *Democracy and the Market: Political and Economic Reforms in Eastern Europe and Latin America* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1991). Also see continuum of minimal requirements for democracy put forth by Eugene D. Mazo, "What Causes Democracy?" Center on Democracy, Development, and the Rule of Law, Stanford Institute for International Studies, Stanford University.
11 Bunce 2000, *op cit*, 709.

communism controlled political capital, who have been most able to convert this political capital into economic capital. However, Catalin Augustin Stoica notes that communist network resources and organizational experience, as forms of human capital, are not the only decisive factors for becoming current owners of economic capital. His findings that "better-educated Romanians have the upper hand in operating as employers eleven years after the collapse of the communist regime" support the "post-socialist managerial thesis, which emphasizes the role of human and cultural capitals for entrepreneurial activities."[21]

While Stoica's research highlights the importance of education for successful post-communist entrepreneurship and small-scale capitalism, he recognizes the extent to which former communists, educated or not, have been "converting their positional power into economic might."[22] Indeed, both Eyal and Stoica suggest that the political capitalism theory may be more suitable than managerialism in describing post-communist Romania. Political capitalism, a type of path dependency model, posits that "capitalism is built not on but with the ruins of socialism,[23] therefore post-socialist transition sees the continuous prosperity of former nomenklatura who are now occupying key economic positions. This makes the post-communist transition not a movement from plan to market, but rather one from plan to clan.[24] Eyal suggests that the political capitalism theory is more fitting for Romania's situation, where 1989 did not mean a radical rupture with the past (as it did, at least to a certain extent, in Czechoslovakia, Hungary, and Poland), and where neo-communists controlled the marketization and privatization processes uninterrupted until 1996. Therefore, communist-era political capital was successfully converted into economic capital by second-tier nomenklatura, instead of being dethroned by the emergence of cultural capital. Building on Eyal's findings, Stoica concludes that both continued political capital from the communist times and human and cultural capital, in the form of a technocratic education and organizational "know-how," matter for post-communist economic elite formation. Contradicting Eyal's claim about Romanian political capitalism, an empirical study conducted on 440 Romanian elites found that former nomenklatura are not, in fact, the most privileged during the transition to market economy.[25]

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21 Ibid, 271.
22 Ibid, 250.
23 David Stark, "Recombinant Property in East European Capitalism," *American Journal of Sociology* 101 (1996): 993-1027.
24 David Stark, "Privatization in Hungary: From Plan to Market or from Plan to Clan?" *East European Politics and Societies* 4(1990): 351-92.
25 Stoiciu, *op cit*, 15. This author's views represent an interesting empirical approach.

While post-communist entrepreneurs and employers represent an important social element and can become a springboard for entering the world of big business and top economic elite, they do not represent the focus of this project. Rather, the level of analysis sought here is that of the elites—as described by classical elite theorists—that beget the highest-level decision-making in the country. However, both the theory of post-communist managerialism and the theory of political capitalism offer important insights into the types of power relevant in the transitional environment of post-communist transitions. Particularly, the contention that cultural capital plays a crucial role in transition, on the one hand, and Stoica's conclusion of Romania that "for incumbents in the state bureaucracy or managers of state enterprises, part-time entrepreneurship is a rent-seeking, predatory form of economic activity,"[26] on the other hand, represent useful starting points for an analysis of strategic elites that cannot be exclusively focused on elected, institutionalized elites. The idea that top power can be converted between different forms of capital is particularly suitable for an analysis of strategic elites that operate outside the establishment political framework, as well as for examining the informal institutions they pay heed to. This idea is supported by a 2004 survey of the Romanian Parliament, which found that 40 percent of MPs lead a "double life," meaning they are either combining a professional career (businesspeople, doctors, professors, lawyers) with a political mandate, or that they have sought political involvement as a formal, temporary way to enhance their professional career.[27] These "strategic candidacies" offer MPs the opportunity to convert political capital into economic capital. Further data provides evidence that the reverse process is also underway, whereby economic power "buys" political positions, especially given the parties' financial dependence on "donor" political candidates.[28]

Adapting Bourdieu's approach on forms of power capital thus provides helpful insights for studying Romania's elites. Another interesting approach belongs to Andrei Stoiciu, who developed an elaborate typology of Romanian elites, studying them between 1989 and 1999. His categories include the nationalists, the populist-survivors, the "passé"-ists, the technocrats, and the elitists.[29] Stoiciu looks at these groups from the perspective of their main features, their rhetoric and claimed legitimacy, the institutions they originate from and which they control, their habits and methods of recruitment, negotiation, and collaboration, and their main attitudes regarding democracy, the economy, the nation, and foreign policy. This comprehensive study of

26 Stoica, *op cit*, 274.
27 Laurentiu Stefan and Razvan Grecu, "Cariere Politice si Reprezentare Parlamentara: 1990-2004," research report, Centrul de Analize si Studii Politice (Bucharest, March 2004) 21.
28 Ibid.
29 Stoiciu, op cit.

Romanian elites represents a source for this project, as Stoiciu's typology supports the claim that strategic elites in Romania operate outside the political-institutional framework. Moreover, Stoiciu's work provides excellent insights into the values and attitudes of Romanian elites up to the turn of the millennium.

Sorin Matei also presents a particularly intriguing view of what he terms "paramodern prestige groups"[30] operating within the intellectual elite in Romania. While this project does not focus on intellectuals, Matei's work represents the starting point for a value-based and organizational look at strategic elites. Specifically, his focus on the paramodern character of elite groups is taken up in a more elaborate discussion of elite values during transition. More importantly, Matei's depiction of prestige groups as focused around a personality-leader—who is both a recruiter and a patron that wields significant power and bypasses market laws—forms the basis of an organizational analysis of Romanian strategic elites at high decision-making levels. The contention here is that these groups are so entrenched that they become informal institutions operating in parallel with the incipient pluralist framework. Independently of their values, the way these elite groups are organized affects their ability to make decisions, be efficient, and pursue the country's development goals.

The typological approach is particularly useful in contexts where class-based approaches are less applicable. In recent work on post-communism, both western and Eastern European authors have supported the view that social classes are not well crystallized in post-communist settings.[31] For example, Burton and Higley have argued that "'a class compromise' orchestrated by state managers is nothing more than some policy strategy on which elites representing diverse and powerful interests for the moment agree."[32] The absence of clearly defined social cleavages makes class-centered approaches difficult to apply in the study of strategic elites. However, to say there are no social classes in Romania is an exaggeration. It is more likely that classes are differentiated but do not always perform the roles traditionally ascribed to them. The works of Romanian sociologist Stelian Tanase, focused especially on the communist period, point to a relative delineation of social classes. A historical look at Romania's social structures from independence supports the view that social cleavages provide important developmental insights. This project will address some of them as they relate to the study of strategic elites; however, it

30 Matei, op cit.
31 Among them are Tom Gallagher, author of *Theft of a Nation: Romania Since Communism* (London: Hurst&Company, 2005) and Cristian Preda, *Partide si Alegeri in Romania Postcomunista: 1989-2004 (Parties and elections in post-communist Romania: 1989-2004)* (Bucharest: Nemira, 2005).
32 Michael Burton and John Higley, "Political Crises and Elite Settlements," in *Elites, Crises, and the Origins of Regimes*, Mattei Dogan and John Higley (eds.) (Oxford: Rowman and Littlefield, 1998), 66.

will not rely on a class-centered approach to analyze these elites. Numerous scholars of elites have been preoccupied with the relationship and distinctions between classes and elites,[33] and the discussion surrounding the two concepts is a lengthy one, beyond the scope of this literature review.

In what follows, a conceptual framework for the project is developed, starting from definitions in the general elite literature, moving toward contextualized concepts from recent works by Romanian analysts, and finally adopting the terminology used in this project.

1.3 Conceptual Framework, Definitions

The concept of strategic elites was developed in Suzanne Keller's book titled *Beyond the Ruling Class*.[34] Preoccupied with the relationship between strategic elites and the destinies of advanced industrial societies like the United States, Keller proposed the concept of strategic elites as comprising "not only political, economic, and military leaders, but also moral, cultural, and scientific ones. Whether or not an elite is counted as strategic does not depend on its specific activities but on the scope of its activities, that is, on how many members of society it directly impinges upon and in what respects."[35] Keller's book examines the emergence, composition, function, recruitment, and circulation of strategic elites, as societies become more complex and stratified. Most importantly, she rejects the claim that a single ruling class sits at the top of the power and decision-making pyramid in developed societies. "Rather, such societies include a number of coexisting pyramids, each with its own internal hierarchy, folklore, rituals, and prizes. Strategic elites resemble the top cards of different suits in a deck of cards—the ace of spade must share his lofty place with the elites of the other three suits."[36] Keller's concept of strategic elites, although developed in the context of advanced industrial societies, is useful for an examination of the evolution of Romanian strategic elites. While contemporary Romanian elites have not evolved in a developed, stable environment, they are doubtless moving toward a diversity of roles and values. In addition to borrowing Keller's depiction of strategic elites as a set of pyramid tops more or less connected to the rest of society, this project also adopts Keller's belief in the

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33 See discussion in the introductory chapter of Suzanne Keller's book *Beyond the Ruling Class* (New York: Arno Press, 1979), 3-25, as well as Eva Etzioni-Halevy, "The Relationship between Elites and the Working Class: on Coupling, Uncoupling, Democracy and [In]Equality," in *Postcommunist Elites and Democracy in Eastern Europe*, John Higley, Jan Pakulski, and Wlodzimierz Wesolowski, (eds) (London: Macmillan Press, 1998) 251-276.
34 Keller, *op cit.*
35 Keller, *op cit*, 20.
36 Ibid, 265.

coexistence of functional and moral counterparts of strategic elites.[37] This functional-moral framework transcends the classical elite theory insistence on amoral Machiavellian elites.

Writing in 1979, Keller expanded the concept of elites and strategic elites, moving beyond classical elitism. However, her work is anchored in the environment of advanced industrial societies that she studied. A conceptual approach linked more to communist and post-communist realities is found in the works of John Higley and Michael Burton, who focus on the study of political elites, envisioning them as "persons holding strategic positions in large or otherwise powerful organizations and movements, including dissident organizations and movements, who directly and regularly influence political decision-making."[38] Thus, whether studying developed societies or post-communist transitions, elite approaches concentrate on the highest level of analysis, by examining the pinnacles of the pyramids of power.

While the study of strategic elites in developed societies and comparative post-communist settings provides starting points for the current analysis, scholarly works focusing on Romanian strategic elites are even more relevant. The most recent one belongs to Sorin Adam Matei and concerns power intellectual groups in Romania, their organization, recruitment, values, and roles in the Romanian public life. Matei calls these groups "paramodern prestige groups," and argues that they "use and exploit market mechanisms, thus contributing to the general deformation of the process of re-modernizing the post-1989 Romanian world."[39] Matei's insights into the organization and values of intellectual elites are also pertinent to the study of Romanian strategic elites. He sees elites as promoting a paramodern value base, one where past and present coexist, functioning both inside and outside official institutions. While Matei addresses only the role of the intellectual elite in the process of modernization, this project integrates his approach into a wider analysis of strategic elites and their role in transition. Interpreting Matei's book from Bourdieu's perspective on forms of capital, it is possible to expand the Romanian analysis of intellectual elites to all those strategic elites who are holders and dealers of symbolic and cultural capital.

The second Romanian study of strategic elites relevant to this project belongs to Andrei Stoiciu who, consistent with Higley, defines elites as those groups capable of playing a

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37 Naturally, Keller was not the first one to address the moral dimensions of leadership. Max Weber, among others, was preoccupied with the moral dilemmas of political elites. See Max Weber, *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology*, H. H. Gerth and C. W. Mills (eds.) (New York: Oxford University Press, 1958).
38 Michael Burton and John Higley, "Elite Settlements," in *American Sociological Review* 52 (1987): 295-307.
39 Matei, op cit, 8.

consistent, substantial role in influencing political results.[40] Stoiciu's conceptual contribution, however, lies in his all-encompassing typology of Romanian strategic elites. Writing in the year 2000, Stoiciu provides a comprehensive list of groups that qualify as Romanian elites: the current government and top state administration (ministers, state secretaries); the leaders of main political parties, deputies and senators who have held at least two consecutive terms; all the ministers and state secretaries since 1989, who have held on to their position for at least a year; directors and chief editors who have the power to determine the editorial politics of a means of mass communication (national dailies, national television channels, national radio), managers of major state or private enterprises, and major union leaders involved in politics; directors of major NGOs, opinion studies centers, civil society experts, and representatives of national institutes active in politics.[41] A study of great magnitude and detail, Stoiciu's book provides useful insights for understanding the development and crystallization of various elite groups in the period 1990-1999. More importantly, Stoiciu's approach helps support this project's claim that strategic elites largely operate in parallel to formal political institutions. His understanding of how Romanian elites organize themselves is similar to Matei's: both authors look at elites as clustered into several groups of interest, which do not necessarily coincide with political parties, ideologies, or socio-political backgrounds.

Based on the conceptual approaches in the mentioned works, this project looks at Romanian strategic elites as semi-formal groups operating both within and parallel to formal political structures, but having an important and consistent influence over political decisions. Identifying the values of strategic elites is an important part of this project; however, in order to capture the dynamic character of elite roles in transition, their organizational patterns and behaviour concerning specific policy arenas must be addressed. With only a year left until Romania joins the European Union, it is especially important to address the evolution of strategic elites, their organization and interaction leading to European integration.

In terms of methodology, the project utilizes a configurative case study of Romanian strategic elites, as they evolve towards democratic transition and European integration. Data is taken from various useful sources: a study of legislative elites conducted between 1990 and 2003,[42] data from Stoiciu's survey of 440 Romanian elites and his analysis of Romanian news

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40 Matei, op cit, Stoiciu, op cit.
41 Stoiciu, *op cit*, 17.
42 Laurentiu Stefan and Razvan Grecu, "Parliamentary Representatives in Post-communist Romania," paper prepared for the EURELITE Regional Conference, Bucharest (September 3-7, 2003).

articles, secondary sources analyzing various types of Romanian elites,[43] as well as the author's own analysis of secondary sources, Romanian news, and interpretation of available empirical data. Awareness of the project's methodological limitations somewhat qualifies the conclusions and also highlights the importance of future research on the topic.

1.4 Research Question

The guiding research question of this project has evolved as research progressed. It started as a general endeavor to understand who governs Romania and towards what end—and therefore to identify Romania's main strategic elite groups and assess the directions they are leading the country to. However, recognizing that the values of strategic elites are just as relevant as their composition and organization, the project incorporated a historical examination of how Romanian elite values have evolved. A secondary focus of the project is to understand how elite values, composition, and organization, affect political development.

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43 These include Stoica's study of Romanian entrepreneurs (Stoica *op cit*), and Preda's study of party elites (see Preda *op cit*). Others are Alexandru Radu's study of Romanian political parties, *Partidele Politice Romanesti dupa 1999* (Romanian Political Parties after 1999) (Bucuresti: Paideia, 2003) and Constantin V. Lucien's study of Romanian elites and society, *Elitele si Statutul Lor in Societate (Elites and their Status in Society)* (Bucuresti: Oscar Print, 2003).

2.2 The Evolution of Romanian Elite Composition and Values: From Independence to Post-Communism

The evolution of elite values is particularly important, as these values shape patterns of behaviour and interaction, and determine outcomes to national priorities such as democratization and European integration. Building on Matei's assertion that today's intellectual elites embody a combination of traditional and modern values, the goal here is to identify the driving values of national strategic elites—in particular non-intellectuals—by examining their evolution and transformation. There are two dimensions to an analysis of elite values: one refers to the extent of agreement between strategic elites over precisely what the rules of the game are, and the second dimension concerns belief in those rules. Considering the elite unity/disunity theoretical spectrum, a distinction can be made between two configurations of united political elites: *ideocratically united* (where "all or nearly all groups belong to a dominant party or movement, and they uniformly profess its ideology, religious belief, or ethnonationalist creed—an 'ideocratic' configuration that is primarily coerced."[45]), and *consensually united* (where "groups are affiliated with competing parties, movements, and beliefs, but they share a consensus about rules and codes of restrained political competitions."[46]). To say that Romania experienced an ideocratically-united elite during its communist dictatorship and is now slowly evolving toward a consensually united one is only a beginning for an analytical endeavor. Nevertheless, in order to answer what rules of the game elites agree over and which beliefs separate them, it is useful to integrate a historical dimension into any consideration of an evolution of elite values.

2.2.1 Independence, Unification, and Monarchy

Romanian political history can be divided into two major phases: the first phase starts with the country's independence in 1878, continues with Romania's unification and its monarchical experiment (late nineteenth to early twentieth century; the second phase covers the communist rise to power and Romania's socialist experiment beginning in 1945-1948 and ending in 1989.

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45 John Higley and Michael G. Burton, "The Elite Variable in Democratic Transitions and Breakdowns," in *American Sociological Review* vol. 54 (1989): 17-32, 18.
46 Ibid.

2. ROMANIAN STRATEGIC ELITES: EVOLVING COMPOSITION, ORGANIZATION, AND VALUES

2.1 Introduction: Continuity and Change

In order to arrive at a contextualized analysis of contemporary strategic elites, the project begins by sketching a few historical directions relevant to the values and organization of strategic elites. Although the argument has been made, on occasion, that the past does not matter for post-1989 transitions—especially in countries like Romania and Albania, for example, where communism meant an ideologically unified elite and no counter-elite—scholars seem to return to historical explanations when institutional changes do not happen as fast as predicted, or when actors seem to fall back on entrenched values rather than consented norms of behaviour. The past does not determine the present; however, it is important in understanding the evolution of contemporary strategic elites.

Continuity and change represent essential dimensions of the post-communist transitions. Advocates of the cultural-historicist approach, who dwell on the fundamental continuities, are at one extreme, and neo-classical institutionalists, who focus on the fundamental changes, are at the other extreme.[44] Even if one adopts a middle path, the question arises of how far back in history one must go to seek the basis of important trends in today's Romanian strategic elites. Many arguments have been made in answer to this question, from varieties of path-dependent theories going back to the Phanariot era (early 1700s to 1821), or nineteenth century independence; to models highlighting the importance of pre-communist values, frozen for half a century by the repressive communist regime and resurrected after 1989; to structural explanations focused on the harsh communist dictatorship. This project does not endorse the views of cultural-historicism, which overemphasize determinism and overall holism. But neither does it adopt a neo-classical institutionalism approach. Rather, it looks at those elements from the past that are less likely to change over short periods, and that are relevant for today's strategic elites.

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44 For a more developed discussion of continuity, change, and pre-communist and communist legacies, see Akos Rona-Tas and Jozsef Borocz, "Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Hungary and Poland: Presocialist and Socialist Legacies among Business Elites," in *Elites after State Socialism: Theories and Analysis*, John Higley and Gyorgy Lengyel (eds) (New York: Rowman and Littlefield, 2000) 209-227.

Romania gained its independence from the Ottoman Empire in 1878, but the formation of domestic elites had started earlier in the century, with the abolishment of Phanariot[47] rule, the rise of the self-determination movement, the process of modernization and Alexandru Ioan Cuza's election and reforms of the 1860s. During Cuza's time in office, Romania's establishment elites (those controlling the state institutions and holding political office) were divided between the modernizers headed by Cuza and controlling the government, and the conservative formation represented in the legislative assembly (an early parliament).[48] Although divided over Romania's development goals, both the modernizers and the conservatives were essentially authoritarian and centralizing in their outlook.[49] Ironically enough, Romania's incipient elites resorted to similar rules of the game to pursue opposite fundamental values. The division between modernizing and traditional values exhibited by Romanian elites during this time would correspond to a *disunified elite* type,[50] and in fact, "the seizure of executive offices through a coup or elite-led uprising,"[51] considered typical of disunited political elites, occurred in Romania in 1864 when Cuza led *a coup d'etat*. At this time, the clash over the rules of game and development goals between the conservative landed aristocracy and Cuza's modernizing faction was evident. The latter was beginning to emerge with the gradual shift from property wealth to capital wealth, carried on by bankers, factory owners, and business owners. Therefore, economic capital was evolving, forcing a shift from traditional to modern values. On the other hand, cultural and symbolic capital, in the form of philosophical currents and ideas, was experiencing a revolution in form but not in

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47 Phanariots were foreign rulers imposed by the Ottoman Empire onto their conquered territories beginning roughly in the end of the seventeenth century. Phanariots themselves were members of privileged Greek families, getting their name from the Greek quarter of Constantinopole (Istanbul), named Phanar. Under the Phanariots, the Romanian principalities endured heavy taxation and harsh, corrupt rule. In 1821, following a domestic revolt, Phanariots were removed from rule and the Ottoman Empire allowed Romanian leaders.

48 See Laurentiu Stefan, "Modernization in the Middle of the 19th Century in the Romanian Principalities: Project and Realization," in *Moral, Legal and Political Values in Romanian Culture: Romanian Philosophical Studies, IV*, Mihaela Czobor-Lupp and J. Stefan Lupp (eds.) (Cultural Heritage and Contemporary Change: Eastern and Central Europe, Vol. 22), as well as Samuel Huntington, *The Political Order in Changing Societies* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1968).

49 Laurentiu Stefan argues that the importance of the modernizer's role for Romania's development "forced them to embrace an authoritarian, firm, and centralizing method of acting." See Stefan, "Modernization in the Middle..."The conservatives embodied by the "monstrous coalition" that ousted Cuza in 1866 were just as ready to resort to authoritarian methods.

50 In fact, Higley and Burton specify that the "origin of national elite disunity apparently lies in the process of nation-state formation." See Higley and Burton 1989, *op cit.*, 20.

51 Dogan and Higley, *op cit*, 18.

foundation.[52] The values of the 1848 intellectual generation, inspired by the European wave of self-determination ideals, remained elitist in character, albeit populist in rhetoric. The values of its conservative opposition, the Junimea movement, were not dissimilar. But while the '48-ers proposed the classical liberal values developed in the western world, the Junimea movement advocated a return to traditional, communal values.[53] Both currents displayed modernizing values, but were in favor of authoritarian ones as well. Through their elitist character, both movements remained philosophical, rather than accessible and grounded in real problems. This exclusive, self-serving character of Romanian elite values remains a trait of Romania's political class and other strategic elites, as it is of most elites in Eastern Europe.[54] Romanian elite circles have typically been quick to adopt the rhetoric of redistributive democratic goals but distance themselves from the real problems of most Romanians.[55]

Having just obtained nationhood and still under Ottoman power, Romanian elites were all too willing to accommodate authoritarian solutions. Even after the establishment of parliament and the passing of the 1866 constitution, these democratic institutions remained a matter of form. Stoiciu notes similar patterns in contemporary Romania, arguing that democratic advances between 1989 and 1999 were mostly at a formal level, with underlying weaknesses represented by a number of characteristics: a strong presidential system, fascination with charismatic leadership, inadequate separation of powers (a strong executive bypassing parliament and ruling by decree), the survival of an authoritarian, hierarchical culture, minimal decentralization of state structures, and the chasm between written and applied law.[56] The environment of elite values evolved significantly, of course, between 1866 and 1999. But because various experiment with democracy never really started with a clean slate in Romania, both the efforts of historical and

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52 Romanian literary critic Titu Maiorescu, leader of the Junimea cultural current, was the first to refer to the "problem of forms without foundation." Although initially a literary term, it travelled to the socio-political environment, describing the problematic adoption of foreign (mostly western-based) political forms on a Romanian-specific foundation. This problem has re-emerged with a vengeance in the post-communist environment, as many observers comment on the procedural institutions of democracy that are not grounded in any meaningful socio-political reality. For more on the "problem of forms without foundation" and its political interpretation, see Matei 2004, op cit. For more on the transitional problems of post-communist democracies and the difficulty of adopting democratic "forms," see Ivan Krastev, "The Balkans: Democracy without Choices," Journal of Democracy, Volume 13, Number 3 (July 2002) and Thomas Carothers, "The End of the Transition Paradigm," Journal of Democracy 13 (April 2002): 5-21.
53 See similar discussion in Matei 2004, op cit.
54 Higley and other observers have often pointed out "the strongly elitist character of East European politics now as before." See John Higley, Jan Pakulski and Wlodzmierz Wesolowski, "Introduction: Elite Change and Democratic Regimes in Eastern Europe," in Higley, Pakulski, and Wesolowski (eds.), Postcommunist Elites and Democracy in Eastern Europe, op cit, 1.
55 Stoiciu, referring to a 1999 Metro-Media Transilvania survey, discusses the gap between voter demands and political elite priorities. See Stoiciu, op cit, 330-331.
56 Stoiciu, op cit, 129-136.

current elites to institute democratic values have been complicated by the need to first remove the notoriety of inefficient democratic institutions and secondly, by the problem of consolidating those institutions.

Therefore, although the values of the emerging Romanian elites were focused around major policy issues during each period, the need to preserve their positions and survive as a privileged group overshadowed other considerations. Up until the advent of communism, the country's orientation towards Europe set the pro-western elites against the traditionalist ones; the multi-dimensional development goals were broadly represented by both modernizers and conservatives; the social redistribution questions were inadequately addressed by elitist philosophies disguised as liberal but advocating collective goals; and, all strategic elites were willing to employ authoritarian methods and bypass the nascent institutional structures. Intellectual elites in particular, whom Matei describes as "the only social force that mattered in Romania for a period of time,"[57] were derived from aristocrats who wanted to survive the process of modernization. In order to do so, the aristocrats adopted the goals of modernization but preserved paramodern, traditionally oligarchic tendencies. According to Matei, this mixture or dualism of pre-modern and modern values survives today in the form of closed prestige groups formed of power-hungry intellectuals.[58]

In 1866, Romania adopted a monarchic parliamentary system, under a foreign ruler, Prince Charles of the German Hohenzollern family, who then became king of Romania between 1881 and 1914. A variety of elite directions crystallized during the country's monarchical period. The first Romanian political parties, the National Liberal Party (PNL) and the Conservative Party (PC), consolidated their positions, and alternated in office until the beginning of World War I. Even though a Romanian party system was formed, values remained traditional and authoritarian. Parliamentary elections only validated the king's predetermined choices, making Romania a façade democracy, one of forms without foundations. Local *prefects* were unchallenged representatives of the state, promoting tight centralization.[59] Moreover, the party elites did not develop significantly opposing values. True, Conservatives supported agriculture-based development, while Liberals were proponents of a more diversified economic solution, with industry taking a lead role.[60] However, the more substantial party platforms both sought to protect the interests of landowners and "modern" aristocrats, at the constant expense of the poor, rural

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57 Matei, *op cit*, 8.
58 Ibid, 13-53.
59 See Gallagher, *op cit*, 24.
60 Ibid, 23.

majority. If the Conservatives were openly advocating elitist, technocratic values to further Romania's development, the Liberals hid their elitist tendencies behind populist, nationalist goals. The Liberals became the dominant force in parliament after the demise of the Conservatives, and were later challenged by the newly formed National Peasants Party (PNT).[61] The PNT's reform-minded, local platform won the support of most Romanians in the 1928 elections of the enlarged post-unification territory. However, the party's initial momentum weakened considerably in the environment of world economic depression.

Although electoral politics and party institutions became a characteristic of the Romanian elite environment, the political elites were not constrained and shaped by party platforms. Rather, "the two major parties did not represent distinct social interests. They functioned as political 'machines' to gain and allocate power, being only two sections of the same privileged stratum."[62] A small-scale economic elite was emerging in Romanian cities, but it was dominated by Jewish entrepreneurs, who were increasingly subjected to anti-Semitic sentiment on the part of both the national elite and the impoverished population.[63] Therefore, while economic capital was growing and diversifying, symbolic capital registered a return to the traditional limitations of ethno-nationalist intolerance. This incipient middle class, important for economic development, did not acquire the political capital so crucial in the process of modernization and democratization.

The crown went from Carol I, who was a competent but remote king—and unable to grasp the need for modernizing, public-oriented reforms—to the irresponsible and corrupt Carol II, "a disastrous role-model for a country needing inspiring leadership as the slump deepened and fascism rapidly exerted its influence beyond the heart of Europe."[64] Extremist solutions became the preferred direction of Romanian elites leading up to World War II. The PNL espoused an ethnic nationalist rhetoric,[65] and most elites advocated self-sufficient economic development, led by an authoritarian center and free of foreign involvement. But, perhaps more importantly, young

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61 PNT was formed in 1922, through the union of the Transylvanian-based Romanian National Party (PNR) and the Peasants Party (PNT). The new formation "was the only party that could claim to have a nationwide popular base." However, PNT was an unbalanced union with PNR as the dominant faction. (PNR had won a governing majority in the first election with universal male suffrage but was dismissed in 1920 by King Ferdinand) Peasants' representatives won only 1 percent of the seats between 1922 and 1937. See Gallagher, *op cit*, 31-32.

62 Stefan 2004, *op cit*, 84, cites Mattei Dogan's comparative investigation of the composition of the Romanian Parliament (both the Senate and the Chamber of Deputies) from 1922 to 1934 (seven electoral cycles).

63 See Gallagher, *op cit*, 25.

64 Gallagher, op cit, 32.

65 Of course, after the forming of Greater Romania in 1918, the country contained sizable minorities (Hungarian, German, Jewish, Ukrainian) whose rights were not acknowledged by the 1923 constitution.

elites[66] became enchanted with the European fascist wave of the 1930s, leading to the rise of a Romanian-grown movement: The Legion of Archangel Michael, and its political expression, the Iron Guard. Albeit short-lived, the Iron Guard became the ultimate expression of Romanian elite radicalism.[67] Infamous for its excesses before and during World War II, the Guard would be partially rehabilitated after 1989. Indeed, extremist tendencies of contemporary elite elements[68] may find their origins and inspiration in the Guard's radical values. Instead of becoming more diverse, more anchored in the country's developmental needs and those of the majority of Romanians, aspirant strategic elites succumbed to the appeal of radicalism, ethnic intolerance, authoritarianism, and yet again, self-centeredness. Institutional politics seemed quickly forgotten. Even among the dominant political parties, the PNL was Bucharest-centered and ignored the needs of the territory acquired after 1918, while the PNT was mostly Transylvania-based.

Tight central control prevented the development of truly free electoral politics and the consolidation of democratic institutions. Carol II himself dismissed parliament in 1938, opening the door to dictatorship. The small-scale economic elite, formed mostly of ethnic minorities and a potential motor for political moderation, was powerless, as the constitution did not even allow equal rights to minorities. Decision-making elites were centrally-based, ignoring local governance. A gap formed between party elites, who were willing to operate in an institutional setting, and authoritarian circles, both monarchical and extremist, which were ready to dismiss these institutions. Evidently, there was no agreement over the rules of the game, and no collaboration between political capital and economically modernizing elements. In the battle of ideas, the authoritarian elements won, attracting intellectuals and other carriers of symbolic capital on the radical side.

2.2.2 Communist Elite Composition and Values

Romania's involvement in World War II was rather less fortunate than its participation in the First World War. Along with considerable loss of territory, the country entered the Soviet Union's sphere of influence. With the near complete eradication of pre-1945 elite groups and the

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66 They were educated urban dwellers, disseminators of symbolic capital and potential political elites.

67 Elements of the Romanian Orthodox Church wholeheartedly supported the fascist movement. The church would later become a clever instrument of communist socialization. However, this project is not concerned with religious elites and their political roles.

68 For example, the Greater Romania Party (PRM), and its leader Corneliu Vadim Tudor, espouse extremist ethnic nationalism, xenophobia, and civic intolerance, which can be traced back historically to the values and ideology of the Guard. While the Iron Guard was, to a certain extent, an expression of European extremist movements, PRM's birth and growth in a much more sedate external environment emphasizes the role of domestic elite values in its formation.

forming of a communist-dominated government in 1945, Romania's path for the next forty-five years slowly, yet firmly took shape. Instead of attempting a detailed chronological account of the elite evolution during communism, the project now turns to a sketch of the dominant values and trends of elites leading up to the present period, and integrating that evolution into the pre-communist value formation.

Most Romanian elites in 1945 were hostile to the (Stalinist) Soviet-inspired communist values system. A strong home-grown communist movement did not exist in Romania at the time. The communist value system thus lacked legitimacy and was imposed by force. Initial elections were rigged in the communists' favor. Members of the pre-communist party elites were persecuted and imprisoned.[69] Moreover, the new communist order propped up by Moscow eliminated the existing generation of strategic elites almost entirely, having associated it with inimical fascism.[70] As Gallagher notes, "decapitating the political elite and divesting the bourgeoisie of their wealth and status were not particularly difficult tasks in a country where the vast majority of people lived off the land and regarded most politicians as belonging to a separate caste."[71] Initially dominated by members of the ethnic minority communities, the Romanian Communist Party, once in power, urgently needed to embrace national communism, in order to acquire domestic legitimacy. Vladimir Tismaneanu remarked that when it was still a pariah on the Romanian political scene, the Romanian Communist Party (PCR) was snubbed by Moscow. As a result, the PCR elite, composed of a new, post-war Romanian political class, developed an underdog mentality and strong anti-Soviet tendencies as it attempted to legitimize itself.[72] Moreover, neutralizing most elements of the pre-communist elites and forcibly co-opting the rest of them, communists resorted to brutal, tight totalitarian control.

After an initial struggle between home-grown communists and those imposed by Moscow, Romanian elites became homogenized around the official party line and the emerging dominant value system. This set of values, adopted by the newly formed party elite, represented a Romanian version of the communist ideology, into which later generations were increasingly socialized. Leadership was centralized and became increasingly authoritarian; collective rule was replaced by growing personal ambitions of power on the part of Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej—the

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69 Resistance to communism was quite strong, however, and continued throughout the 1950s among formerly landed peasants who were forced to enter communist collective farms. Romanians fought hard to keep the lands they had been so recently granted.

70 I am grateful to Dr. Ilya Vinkovetsky for pointing out this fact.

71 Gallagher, op cit, 48.

72 Tismaneanu, Vladimir, "Understanding national Stalinism: reflections on Ceausescu's socialism," (unpublished paper), May 1999.

first Romanian communist leader—and a cult of personality within the Politburo. Struggles for power below the top leader were personalized vendettas rather than value-based disagreements. The personalization of power became the norm, and would culminate with Nicolae Ceausescu's formation of a sultanistic dictatorship.[73] Scholars of Romanian communism noted the absence of any liberal, reform-minded section in the PCR. The small degree of oppositional discourse that existed in Romania focused almost entirely on Ceausescu, and not the illegitimacy or irrationality of the system as a whole.[74] Before the establishment of communism, polarization was growing between elites willing to act within the institutional framework and those dedicated to authoritarian solutions; once communism settled in, consensus over the rules of the game became virtually unanimous within the increasingly ideocratically united elite. As Irina Culic remarks, "the Romanian repressive apparatus operated in two stages: first, it annihilated the cultural and political elite which had emerged during the liberal and Western-oriented period between the two World Wars; secondly, it created its own 'intelligentsia' and did everything in its power to co-opt it to further the purposes of the regime."[75]

The first wave of homegrown communist elites was made of working-class elements, faithful to the party and the state leader, conservative and hostile to professionals.[76] Patron-client relationships thrived, and political elites grouped around the top leadership were quick to exploit ownership of the state for their personal gain. Remoteness from the population continued to be an ingrained value of the top elite, as the gap between party leadership and the rank-and-file widened. The PCR had become a political monolith.

The country's development goals were misguided, as reform-minded, modernizing ideas did not stand a chance against the communist ideological drive. As a result, although it had started on Yugoslavia's economic path of consumer goods and independent trade relationships with the west, Romania became an inefficient bulk producer of non-competitive goods, heavy industry that was not supported by domestic capacity, and gargantuan efforts were made to inculcate proletarian values in an extensively rural population.[77] This communist policy of change

[73] Juan J. Linz and Alfred Stepan, *Problems of Democratic Transition and Consolidation: Southern Europe, South America, and Post-Communist Europe* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996).
74 Ibid.
75 Irina Culic, "The Strategies of Intellectuals: Romania Under Communist Rule in Comparative Perspective," in *Intellectuals and Politics in Central Europe*, Andras Bozoki, ed. (Budapest: Central University Press, 1999) 43.
76 Lucien, *op cit*, 126-136.
77 See Gallagher, op cit, Tismaneanu, op cit, and Kenneth Jowitt, Revolutionary Breakthroughs and National Development: The Case of Romania, 1944-1965 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1971).

constituted modernization of a sort, but was hardly well-balanced and suited to the needs and wishes of the country's population.

The public goods and the state itself were treated as the personal property of party leadership, and bureaucratization offered increasing opportunities for corruption. The first wave of homegrown communists lacked a modern managerial outlook. The second generation of Romanian communist elites, during the 1960s and 1970s, would be associated with a more professional and less ideological value-system. This "new new class"[78] possessed superior education in comparison to the first wave of communist elites, during the 1940s and 1950s; it consisted of specialists, managers, technicians, engineers, who had a less rigid outlook and were willing to negotiate a power-sharing pact with the old apparatchiks. According to Stelian Tanase, subsequent cohorts of this professionalized elite would later become the true beneficiaries of the fall of communism. Indeed, their know-how, represented by their managerial skills, coupled with their communist political capital, would greatly facilitate their access to post-communist political power. Nevertheless, during communism their expertise retained a relatively small role. Although the technocrats of the second communist generation would modify the party's outlook, any real reform contribution on their part was stifled by Ceausescu's increasingly rigid and obsolete ideological domination.[79] Therefore, the growth of managerial elites, evident in other countries in Central and Eastern Europe, was blocked in Romania. The cultural and symbolic capital contributed by managerial elites elsewhere in Eastern Europe was substituted by the regime's increasing reliance on communist socialization and a sultanistic personality cult.

In addition to subordinating economic and symbolic capital to the centralized communist party-state, thus ensuring the homogeneity of elites, the Romanian communist machine eliminated any significant attempts at dissidence. Intellectual elites, in particular, were subject to persecution and were employed as agents of communist socialization by the center. Compared to most communist countries in the region, no unified or significantly organized dissident movement formed in Romania. Instead, a few hundreds of intellectuals embraced the idea of passive dissent, forming small counter-elite circles that sought to "escape" from the ideological straightjacket that

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78 Used throughout the literature on communism, this term was adopted by Romanian sociologist Stelian Tanase who described the second part of the communist period as a successful pact between the Stalinist political elite and the professional elite. The pact guaranteed their positions to the conservative Stalinist elite, while allowing access to resources and power to the newly groomed, bureaucratized professional elite. The term "new class" was first used by the Yugoslav communist and later anti-Tito dissident Milovan Djilas, but the idea had been developed earlier, to suggest that the communist state bureaucracy (nomenklatura) was becoming a class in itself. Stelian Tanase calls the second generation of home-grown communists the "new new class." See Stelian Tanase, Revolutia Ca Esec. Elite si Societate (Revolution as Failure. Elites and Society) (Iasi: Polirom, 1996).
79 Tismaneanu, op cit.

constituted the reality of communism. Rather than opposing the communist regime, such intellectual elites attempted internal moral exile. As Michael Shafir points out, intellectual elites became pawns in the game between Ceausescu's communist faction and Dej's "old guard":

> Unlike the liberalization process in Poland, Hungary, or Czechoslovakia, the two main features of the beginning of Romanian "guided liberalization" appear to be its largely exogenous origins, that is, its having been induced by external rather than by internal motives (the conflict with the Soviet Union) and the fact that it was not initiated by intellectual pressure "from below," but by the party's own initiative "from above." Rather than initiating the process, the Romanian intellectuals responded to it.[80]

The Romanian communist elite, represented by Ceausescu's circle of power, the Politburo and the top party echelon, fabricated its legitimacy and forced its domination over an unwilling but powerless critical intelligentsia. As the regime became unbearably dictatorial, voices from among the second generation, technocratic wave of communists began to be raised, but they were unorganized and too frightened to protest against the ruling elite. The revolution of 1989 would occur before these potential reformers could organize themselves and gain some public legitimacy by opposing the dictatorship. They would nevertheless become a core group in the country's post-communist elite.

Literature on post-communist elites often follows the continuity-change dimension; namely, it identifies the extent to which the new elite is composed of members of the old communist elite. In the early 1990s, Thomas Baylis argued that "the present elites come largely from...the 'lower nobility' of the communist era; most lived fairly comfortably under the old order and many contributed significantly to its support system."[81] In the case of Romania, Baylis argues, "ostensibly reformed ex-communists" would "take and maintain power without meaningful negotiations with the country's weak opposition."[82] Before asserting that the Romanian post-communist regime is little more than a continuation of its communist dictatorship, a few observations are in order: first, the absence of any kind of political opposition to the Romanian communist dictatorship limited the possibilities for the formation of a post-communist political opposition (i.e., only former communists possessed the political savvy); second, even though former communists took hold of Romania's government, they did change their discourse and rhetoric to a social democratic platform. Therefore, the communist past of the post-

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80 Michael Shafir, "Political Culture, Intellectual Dissent, and Intellectual Consent: The Case of Romania," *ORBIS* (Summer 1983): 393-420, 411.
81 Thomas Baylis, "Plus Ca Change? Transformation and Continuity Among East European Elites," *Communist and Post-communist Studies* 27 (3) (1994): 315-328, 315.
82 Ibid, 320.

communist elites (political or not) is only important in as much as it reflects their values and actions after 1989. In what follows, the project examines the formation and behaviour of post-communist strategic elites, building on their historical evolution, and the crystallization of their values and organization after 1989.

2.2.3 Post-Communist Elite Values: Changing Context, Prevailing Values

By looking back at the formation of Romanian elite values, from pre-communist independence to unification, through two world wars, and from monarchy to communism, it appears that the evolution of strategic elites almost never followed a pro-development path. On the contrary, elites developed and functioned in an environment where their actions were somewhat irrelevant and estranged from the pressing challenges of the country and its population. Such elites were essentially autonomous within a highly controlled country. The brief period of Romanian democracy before 1989 was weakened by authoritarian elites who continuously undermined the vitality of pluralist institutions.

From independence in 1878 (and even before then, as the Romanian boyars had evolved into a powerful domestic elite opposed to foreign leadership and committed to independence) up until 1989, strategic elites were characterized by a number of continuities in their outlook and values.

1. *Authoritarianism.* They were devoted to authoritarian rule, long after such a style of rule could be justified by the imperatives of modernization.[83]

2. *Anti-pluralism.* They were prone to consistently by-pass pluralist decision-making mechanisms; parliament remaining a weak tool in the hands of a strong executive, before losing its role altogether during communism.[84]

3. *Ultra-Nationalism.* They used nationalism for its rhetorical appeal. Nationalism thus went from being the key platform of the ambitious pro-independence elite

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83 For an account of authoritarianism after independence and during the country's first modernization experiment, see Stefan, "Modernization in the Middle..."*op cit.* Gallagher and Matei document elites' commitment to authoritarianism during Romania's unification process and its monarchical period. Tismaneanu and Shafir discuss authoritarianism and other elite values during communism. See Gallagher, *op cit*, Matei, *op cit*, Tismaneanu, *op cit*, and Shafir, *op cit.*

84 Ever since the forming of Romanian Parliament, it was a formal institution lacking a decision-making role. Stefan addresses the role of parliament during Alexandru Ioan Cuza's time (1864-66) and in contemporary Romanian politics; Gallagher examines the monarchical period; Mary-Ellen Fischer, Vladimir Tismaneanu, and many others discuss the façade role of institutions during communist rule. See Stefan, "Modernization in the Middle...", *op cit*, Gallagher, *op cit*, Mary Ellen Fischer, *Nicolae Ceausescu: A Study in Political Leadership* (Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1989), and Tismaneanu, *op cit.*

from 1878 to 1945, to the convenient legitimizing tactic for communism from national communism to national Stalinism.[85]

4. *Selective endorsement of western values.* They appealed to western values in a highly selective manner, adopting, in order, the values of self-determination (1878-1918),[86] limited pluralism (1866-WWII),[87] façade social and political emancipation (land reform, universal male suffrage), and independent foreign policy (during the so-called "maverick communism," becoming a duplicitous Western ally during the cold war).[88]

5. *Personalization of power and clientelism.* They promoted highly personalized decision-making, with elite groups organized around charismatic leaders and within clientelistic networks and not around policy priorities.[89]

6. *Elite lack of accountability.* Throughout the process of modernization and development, they remained highly isolated from the needs of Romanians, lacking real commitment to populist goals.[90]

7. *Intellectual radicalism and de-politicization.* Intellectual elites either espoused extremist values or were marginalized from politics and often became apolitical gurus.[91]

8. *Stifled entrepreneurship.* Economic entrepreneurs, the potential middle class, were often shunned as foreign elements and anti-Romanian in their outlook

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85 Matei and Stefan discuss the nationalist platform of the post-Phanariot, pro-independence Romanian elites. Gallagher and Tismaneanu address the ultra-nationalist fascist movement of the 1930s. Tismaneanu traces the evolution of nationalism from a legitimizing platform for the early communists to an instrument of tight ideological control during Ceausescu's rule. See Tismaneanu, *op cit*, Gallagher, *op cit*, Matei, *op cit*, and Stefan, "Modernization in the Middle...", *op cit*.

86 See Stefan and Matei, *op cit*.

87 See Gallagher and Matei, *op cit*.

88 See Shafir, Tismaneanu, and Fischer, *op cit*.

89 Matei describes this phenomenon at the level of intellectual elites. Various accounts from authors like Tismaneanu, Gallagher, and Shafir attest to the interactions between the power bases of various leaders during communism, concentrated around Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej and Nicolae Ceausescu.

90 From the onset of Romania's pluralist experiment in the early 20th century, elites could not be held accountable as a complex electoral law thwarted any public attempts to hold their rulers responsible. Inter-war electoral parties were political machines, rather than recruitment opportunities for widespread interests. During communism, elections became a farcical component of a non-transparent decision-making process. (See, for example, Mattei Dogan's account of inter-war parties and numerous reports of communist rule).

91 See Vladimir Tismaneanu and Dan Pavel, "Romania's Mystical Revolutionaries: The Generation of Angst and Adventure Revisited," *East European Politics and Societies*, vol.8, no.3 (Fall 1994): 402-438, Matei's depiction of Romanian intellectuals across time, *op cit*, Culic, *op cit*, and Alina Mungiu-Pippidi. "Romanian Political Intellectuals Before and After the Revolution," in *Intellectuals and Politics in Central Europe*, Andras Bozoki, ed., *op cit*.

before 1945, and completely lost their economic and political capital after 1945.[92]

9.   *Underdeveloped elite momentum.* The ideocratically united communist elite swept away whatever small progress toward a consensually united elite had been made during the country's incipient pluralist period.

This syndrome of elite attitudes and attributes is not necessarily reflective of post-communist strategic elites. However, these various viewpoints are features shaped over a century of elite development, and constitute the background on which the current elites operate. Scholars interested in Romanian elites have given varying degrees of importance to the historical evolution of elite values. Interestingly, Tom Gallagher combines an analysis based on long-term historical trends in Romania's leadership with a scathing critique of the moral vacuum in which the current ruling elite operates. Andrei Stoiciu dismisses pre-1989 elite characteristics as belonging to a now gone, ideocratically united communist ruling clique. Many comparative studies emphasize the importance of communism or pre-communist elite dynamics to explain contemporary post-communist elite development.[93] This project acknowledges the legacy of the past, selecting those elements that seem relevant to the present, and weaves them into a contemporary trend analysis.

Applying his theoretical framework on elite unity-disunity to Romania, Higley assesses its elites as divided "over fundamental issues of democracy, economic reform, and national unity."[94] Writing in 1998, Higley acknowledges significant change of the communist, ideocratic elite configuration; however, he characterizes Romanian elites as lacking both unity and differentiation, traits that correspond to a divided elite typical of an authoritarian regime. While Higley's conceptual framework is useful when studying the role of elites in democratic transitions, it may require a much longer historical frame of reference to fit elite transformations into his theoretical model. In other words, focus on broad conceptual categories may result in missing smaller, but significant changes in elite dynamics.

If Higley's standards may be too demanding, other authors are quick to see value unity emerging among Romanian elites. Adopting Higley's theoretical framework, Andrei Stoiciu examines the values, discourse, and resources of what he considers Romania's top strategic elites in 1999. One of his major assumptions is that Romanian elites share a value-based consensus

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92 See Gallagher's references to persecution of economic entrepreneurship before and during communism, as well as Eyal's mention of the lack of economic entrepreneurship during communism. Gallagher, *op cit*, Eyal 1997, *op cit*.
93 See Burton, Higley, Gil Eyal, Thomas Baylis, Vladimir Tismaneanu, and Stelian Tanase *op cit*.
94 Higley et al, 1998, *op cit*, 20.

because they come from the majority of ideocratically united elites during the totalitarian system that preceded them.[95] For Stoiciu, this value-based consensus was expressed by elites' support for the forming of institutions and structures that allow the transition to democracy and market economy, as well as by a consensual agreement over the way the political system should function.[96] However, it is debatable whether elite agreement over the forming of institutions and political mechanisms should be equated with elite unity; rather, it seems that these indicators are so low a standard of measurement that even disunited elites can satisfy it. Moreover, even if elites agree over the functioning rules of the political system, they may have varying opinions over what goals these mechanisms should support.[97]

An inevitable evolution or modification of values did follow the fall of communism in 1989. However, this evolution did not result in consensus regarding democratic norms and rules of behaviour, i.e., elite unity. Rather, strong paternalistic values survive in modified, marketized forms, while market oriented democratic values had to be formed from scratch. This parallel system of old and new values permits switching back and forth depending on the circumstances. There is agreement among strategic elites to exercise power covertly and engage in non-transparent decision-making; however, elites are quick to claim a commitment to democracy and transparency if it helps them undermine opponents who, in turn, resort to the same flexible and opportunistic tactics. Instead of being the underlying framework of elite interactions, democratic norms and rules constitute a tool used in the conflict between elites for the control of power. Those who refuse to engage in this duplicitous or dualistic system essentially stand to lose their positions and often become victims of their less scrupulous or more pragmatic peers.[98] Therefore, the only significant elite unity regarding values and commitment to rules of game reflects itself at a very general and formalistic level, resulting in a skin-deep commitment to democracy, for the sake of international donors and sections of the electorate.

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95 Stoiciu, *op cit*, 22.
96 Ibid.
97 Stoiciu qualifies his belief in a value-based consensus among Romanian elites with a second hypothesis, namely that "the value-based consensus was accompanied by a very weak structural integration of elites, of their resources of power and influence, and by a strong polarization of their political discourse and the stakes defined by this discourse." Stoiciu, *op cit*, 22. While this project acknowledges the lack of elite integration in what regards resources of power and political discourse, it sees a direct link between value-based unity and structural unity, thus contending that value-based unity will lead to sharing of resources and moderation in political discourse.
98 A tragic example involved Prosecutor Cristian Panait, who was indirectly investigating a corruption case involving a Romanian prefect. Most likely due to political pressure from PSD circles of power, prosecutor Panait committed suicide in 2002. See *BBC Romanian*, "Cazul Panait va fi redeschis," April 19, 2005. www.bbc.co.uk./romanian.

The role and power of the Romanian Parliament provide additional evidence that elite agreement over the forming and functioning of democratic institutions does not mean commitment to democratic values. A recent and extensive study of Romanian parliamentary elites found that parliament "lost its legislative function to the executive branch, which is busy drafting emergency ordinances," and it "will soon cease to be a representative institution,"[99] as it is increasingly under the control of central, Bucharest-controlled elites, at the expense of local voices. Parliament retains its pre-communist notoriety as a weak institution, tightly controlled by the authoritarian executive. Authoritarianism and centralism thus survive. Such value continuity is facilitated by the close collaboration between political and economic capital (which make Romania a good example of the political capitalism theory). Moreover, centralism and lack of commitment to democratic values are also reflected by elites' state-centric view. Political elites and their strategic partners continue to view the state as both the main instrument and the primary goal of transitional reform.[100] Some leaders may even follow Ceausescu's example in treating the state as their private domain.[101]

The commitment of today's Romanian elites to Western pluralistic values remains selective and superficial, following a now well established pattern. The benefits associated with joining the European Union have persuaded even the more traditional, ethnocentric political elites to espouse a pro-European rhetoric, mostly in the hope of capturing EU and other development funds. However, it is possible that the European Union, by feeding funds to those elites controlling their distribution, is contributing to the strengthening of non-democratic groups, and thus exacerbating a vicious cycle of non-accountability. For example, Tom Gallagher's account of the role of the European Union in Romania's developmental path warns of the danger of Romanian elites transforming themselves into a ruling oligarchy supported by siphoning funds from the EU.[102]

In his account of Romanian elites, Stoiciu concludes that "democracy, the electoral game, the logic of power distribution, the foreign policy orientation, the principle of market economy have emerged as constitutive elements of the elite consensus."[103] While Romanian strategic elites accept the necessity to respect the rules and regulations of party politics, the basic functioning of

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99 Laurentiu Stefan, *Patterns of Political Elite Recruitment in Post-communist Romania* (Bucuresti: Ziua, 2004) 237.
100 See Romulus Brancoveanu, "Strategia fortei si strategia discursului," *Sfera Politicii*, no. 115, 2005.
101 In 2003, the report Armaghedon II was released, unveiling Adrian Nastase's dubious wealth-building activities and his sultanistic trends. The then prime minister was accused of accumulating an immense wealth through corrupt means and abuse of power, and of using his family members for his schemes.
102 See Gallagher's concluding chapter, in Gallagher, *op cit.*
103 Stoiciu, *op cit*, 331.

democratic institutions, and the country's position with regard to international institutions (like the EU), this is a formalistic agreement, not one based on a deeper acceptance of the role of these institutions. Another component of democracy, civil society, is experiencing a slow start in Romania, as an attempt by selected Romanian elites to develop democratic values "from below." In Stoiciu's elite typology, the elitists are the ones dedicated to building civil society in Romania.[104] However, their leadership role in Romania is limited to controlling a few cultural institutions and NGO initiatives, with sparse ministerial representatives or consultants. More importantly, the values promoted by this elite (grassroots mobilization and strengthening of civil society) are associated with a perceived elitist approach to development, unfit for the broad delivery necessities of its message. Therefore, the current Romanian elites appear successful in cherry-picking democratic values suitable to a positive foreign image, while maintaining traditional understandings of leadership.

Among the traditional values embraced by Romanian elites, nationalism has had an interesting evolution. Initially associated with the country's independence and self-determination after centuries of foreign domination, nationalism was the credo of Romanian elites in the first experiment with self-rule. However, during the wave of fascist movements leading to World War II, Romanian elites adopted extremist nationalism as a complement to fascism. Despite a large percentage of minorities, Romania did not modify its constitution, sanctioning the nation-state and Romanians as the only lawful citizens. Other minorities were tolerated, but were not allowed to play a significant development role. Communism embraced nationalism as its best chance to legitimize a Soviet-imposed regime. Later, as systematization and industrialization remained unpopular with both rural and urban Romanians, nationalism remained the communist regime's useful tool in eliciting compliance. By 1989, from manifestation of national self-determination, nationalism had become a tested and trusted political tool used by elites to mobilize the population. This tool was successfully tested by both extremist nationalist groups (represented politically by the Greater Romania Party-PRM, often considered a continuation of national communism) and more moderate ones (politically represented by the Social Democratic Party, which Stoiciu characterizes as the populist-survivor group).[105] The PRM's unexpected electoral success in 2000 raised fears among both Romanian and foreign observers that nationalism could explode into a destructive ethnic conflict, as it had happened elsewhere in Eastern Europe. Such fears were exaggerated, but extremist nationalism remains an effective political tool to attract a disillusioned electorate, one that may likely be used in the future. Especially when coupled with

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104 Stoiciu, op cit.
105 Stoiciu, *op cit*, conclusion.

the populist ("survival politics") rhetoric adopted by circles of the political elite, nationalism may result in tensions after Romania joins the European Union.

The personalization of politics has historically been, and continues to represent an important value characteristic of the Romanian elites. Personal conflicts between members of the same political parties, or prominent representatives of the governing coalition, over-played by the media, currently dominate the public elite dialog. During Ion Iliescu's third presidential term (2000-2004), his conflicts with Prime Minister Adrian Nastase were the subject of innumerable press reports and analyses. Attempts to paint the same polarized picture between current President Traian Basescu and Prime Minister Calin Popescu-Tariceanu are less effective, yet the understanding remains that conflicts between members of the elites are rarely policy-related, and often concern a personalized struggle for power. Similarly, conflicts are common within political parties, between the proponents of opposing personality-leaders, sometimes grouped around generational criteria.[106] The relationship between the Ministry of Justice and the Magistrate Superior Council (CSM) is characterized by the personal feud between Justice Minister Monica Macovei and CSM President Dan Lupascu.[107] The personal interactions between elites are often decisive for passing legislation in parliament, and MPs have been known to storm out of session when the *ad hominem* clashes become too heated. According to Gallagher, "the importance of the personality factor in politics stems from the weakness of parties and the failure to distinguish between competing programmes."[108] If Gallagher's perspective on the personalization of politics is centered on electoral choices for personalized, charismatic leadership, it is the elites themselves who choose to relate to each other personally rather than through institutional channels, perpetuating this value.[109] The personality and professional background of elites presiding over various institutions (juridical, political, or economic) transcend the underlying role of these institutions.

Personality clashes within the same political factions or governing coalition—for example, current squabbles between leaders of the National Liberal Party and the Democratic

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106 For example, conflicts between different factions of the PNL (National Liberal Party) have led to the suspension from the party of member Cristian Boureanu, who is also an MP, for his critical statements against the party's leadership, especially its leader, Calin Popescu-Tariceanu. (See Mirela Rus, "Cristian Boureanu a Fost Suspendat din PNL," *BBC Romanian*, December 9, 2005, www.bbc.co.uk/romanian).
107 See *BBC Romanian*, "Ingrijorari Privind Soarta Justitiei," Dec. 3, 2005.
108 Gallagher, *op cit*, 11.
109 One example concerns the scandal surrounding a private (and secret, before it was leaked to the press) phone call made by Romanian Prime Minister Tariceanu to General Prosecutor Ilie Botos concerning the taking into custody of businessman Dinu Patriciu, a close friend and business partner of the PM. See Eliade Balan, "Interests Along Axis of Cotroceni and Victoria Palaces," *Romania Libera*, trans. World New Connection, Nov. 2, 2005, http://wnc.dialog.com/.

Party, or between the president and prime minister of the previous administration—are worrying signs of elite divisions that override political platforms and weaken the main actors internally. The personalization of politics is also apparent, however, in the virulent relationship between opposing loci of political power. While they profess willingness to cooperate with the opposition, in actuality political elites engage in personal attacks against leaders of other factions, and block the achievement of policy goals by refusing to vote in parliament, unnecessarily prolonging deliberations and the work of committees, and blaming even disease epidemics on their political adversaries.[110] Beyond the vicious verbal disputes between opposing factions (often characteristic of western politics, especially around election time) is the much more serious willingness to undermine the long-term political and social goals advocated by the political opposition. Control of institutions such as parliament and the Constitutional Court translates into manipulating decisions with complete disregard for policy outcomes.

Having mentioned the selective commitment to western values, as well as the elites' willingness to by-pass parliament and other democratic institutions,[111] it is important to note that these institutions do play a significant role in the evolution of Romanian elite values and interactions. Neither parliament nor political parties are fulfilling their designed pluralist goals; instead, parliament is becoming a locus of political socialization for aspiring political elites, who see it is a launching platform for more coveted political appointments, while parties are becoming political machines rather than sources of long-term political doctrine. Stefan's analysis of party recruitment and MP attitudes supports this claim. His survey data points out that once they acquire some political experience, Romanian MPs become "psychologically mobile," which means they are very willing to abandon their position in parliament for other, more rewarding offices.[112] He finds that "a number of MPs actually buy their places on the electoral party lists, and their access to parliament, although (or because) they have no traceable history in the party or in other public or political institutions."[113] Stefan's research indicates that both political parties and parliament represent starting grounds for Romanian professional politicians (but not

110 Recently, Prime Minister Calin Popescu-Tariceanu delivered a report on European integration to parliament. The prime minister strayed from the prepared text, launching a personal attack against "the congregation of PSD barons" and alluding to former Prime Minister and current chairman of the Chamber of Deputies Adrian Nastase. Tariceanu's attack was met by a matching retort from PSD Chairman Mircea Geoana, who accused the prime minister of representing "the group of oilmen and oligarchs." See Bogdan Bratescu, "Tariceanu and Geoana Quarrel in Parliament," *Evenimentul Zilei*, trans. World News Connection, December 21, 2005. http://wnc.dialog.com/.
111 An example is former President's Ion Iliescu's blatant disregard for the constitutional limit of two presidential mandates when he decided to run for a third term; also, political elites after 1989 have made frequent attempts to modify the Constitution as a political tactic.
112 Stefan, *Patterns...*, *op cit*, 235.
113 Stefan 2003, op cit, 13.

incubators to train professional legislators).[114] While devoid of its legislative—and as Stefan predicts, soon of its representative—function, parliament is still a significant institution. It may crystallize into a socializing arena where political elites (and perhaps business elites who are willing to buy their political spots) interact with each other and negotiate policy decisions. In a current environment where elites are internally divided and unwilling to cooperate or even tolerate the opposition, such an arena may be a crucial instrument of democracy. Therefore, the possibility exists that a pluralist institutional design that is now dysfunctional and manipulated by professional politicians may, eventually, shape the actions of those same elites into a democratic framework of consultation and cooperation.

In sum, in response to different contextual challenges, elite values have largely maintained the same historical core, as elites are resorting to a tested and trusted set of responses to deal with new transitional situations. For example, nationalism, which was a historical constant in Romanian elites' repertoire of policy responses, is now used to keep population from expressing discontent with transition, and to justify tardiness in privatization[115] and hesitant market reform. Authoritarianism, another favorite of elite standardized policy solutions, is currently used to avoid consultation with opposition forces within pluralist settings. Post-communist governments have relied extensively on rule by decree, justifying it as a more efficient method of passing laws than prolonged negotiations with non-cooperating opposition forces. Nevertheless, a key addition to this foundation of values is represented by the unequivocal establishment of pluralistic institutions. Although parliament, the rule of law, and power-sharing checks and balances are to this day formal, lacking substance and a well defined role in the decision-making framework, it is possible that even the illusion of democratic mechanisms and norms can assist in the process of democratization.

The impact of institutions on elite values is reflected by the strengthening of political parties and their role in staffing parliament. For example, Stefan has observed that "a long party career and a leading position in the party structures are ones of the most widespread characteristics of successful candidates for parliament."[116] While parliament is not a strong legislative or representative forum, as expected of a pluralist institution, it has become a visible and necessary arena of elite interaction. Elite values, although currently not accommodating of democratic processes, may follow in the wake of formal institutional development. As Giuseppe

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114 The terms "professional politician" and "professional legislator" belong to Stefan. Ibid.
115 "We are not selling our country!" was the government's preferred slogan during the first half of the 1990s. President Ion Iliescu's circle of trust wanted to delay foreign investment and privatization of large, state-owned industrial assets for as long as possible, in order to reap the benefits of continued subsidies.
116 Stefan, *Patterns...*, *op cit*, 233.

di Palma has pointed out, "new attitudes and beliefs may well develop only *after* political actors have embarked, perhaps unintentionally, upon new behavior...Also, democracy may be chosen by default because other political options are impracticable or thoroughly discredited, not necessarily because it is considered intrinsically superior."[117]

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117 Giuseppe di Palma, "Why Democracy Can Work in Eastern Europe," *Journal of Democracy*, Vol. 2, No.1 (Winter 1991): 21-31, 25.

3. POST-COMMUNIST ELITE COMPOSITION

3.1 Introduction and Comparative Perspectives

Generally speaking, the anti-communist revolutions across Central and Eastern Europe[118] derived from an elite pact between communist managerial elites and the humanistic intellectuals.[119] In these countries, the late communist period had witnessed the rise, within the communist party, of a new stratum of professionals and managers, who became powerful enough to contest the traditional communist nomenklatura.[120] This managerial, professional elite, which was still part of or technically under the control of the communist apparatus, was itself challenged by a counter-elite (formed of anti-system humanistic intelligentsia). After 1989, a governing pact was formed between "the technocratic-managerial elite together with the new politocracy *which constitute its dominant faction* [author's italics], and elite humanistic and social science intellectuals *which form its dominated faction.* [author's italics]"[121] In other words, as a rule, members of the post-communist managerial elite, which had accounted for the more liberal communist faction, grudgingly allied themselves with the former anti-communist dissidents. Through this reconfiguration of political forces, the post-communist political class was thus formed.

In contrast to most of Central and Eastern Europe, the 1989 upheaval left the communist nomenklatura in power in Romania. While some prominent communist figures disappeared from the forefront of the political scene, most important members of the former nomenklatura remained in their posts. Specifically, top elements of the former state apparatus and administrative structure maintained control of political and governmental agencies, and took over

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118 This was especially the case in Hungary, Poland, Slovenia, and the Czech Republic.

119 Eyal et al, *op cit.*

120 The managerial communist elite was less indoctrinated than the nomenklatura, succeeding through expertise rather than through bureaucratic loyalty and ideological allegiance. Naturally, the managerial communist elite was still a part of the communist system, and was criticized by anti-system intellectuals and dissidents.

121 Author's italics. When making this statement, Eyal adopts the language of French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu, who believed that a dominating (ruling) class comprised two factions, namely, a dominant faction and a dominated faction. For Bourdieu, the owners of financial/economic capital may form the dominant faction, whereas the owners of cultural capital represent the dominated faction. In the post-communist environment of Central Europe, Eyal identifies the technocratic/managerial elite as a partial faction of the dominating faction, along with a "new politocracy" and the humanistic intelligentsia/former dissidents as the dominated faction. Eyal 1997, *op cit*, 1.

the processes of economic privatization. This communist officialdom included traditional elements, as well as members of the so-called second and third generation communists.[122] These newer cohorts of communist cadre were more professional and less ideological than the first "Stalinist" wave of Romanian communists. Moreover, many of them had managerial skills and technocratic backgrounds, and they were willing to negotiate a power-sharing arrangement with the traditional nomenklatura. In Romania, due to the especially repressive nature of the communist regime, managerial/technocratic elites had never become a powerful enough force to challenge the party-centered, ideologically communist nomenklatura. The communist nomenkltaura also had not been faced by any significant counter-elite or humanistic intelligentsia. Instead, those communist elites with a technocratic, managerial background had been content to operate within the communist system rather than to challenge its limitations; intellectuals either collaborated with the regime or faced severe persecution. This arrangement ensured technocrats their positions in the repressive Romanian state apparatus, while guaranteeing the compliance of such less ideological, more liberal elements alongside the old-school apparatchiki. Naturally, by 1989, on the eve of Romania's revolution, Ceausescu's communist elite included both technocratic elements and the top bureaucratized nomenklatura.

When communism fell, elite composition took a different path in Central and Eastern Europe (Hungary, Poland, and Czech Republic) than it did in Romania. Moreover, the Romanian scenario also differed from the situation in the former Soviet Union republics of Ukraine, Russia, Moldova, and Belarus. Immediately after the dissolution of the Soviet Union, those four countries experienced political competition and so-called "pluralism by default."[123] Thus, as Lucan Way persuasively argues, "competitive politics were rooted much less in robust civil societies, strong democratic institutions, or democratic leadership than in the *inability of incumbents to maintain power or concentrate political control* by preserving elite unity, controlling elections and media, and/or using force against opponents."[124] In contrast, Romanian incumbent elites were able to maintain control over state resources and to concentrate political control, after a few initial hiccups.[125] The media was successfully controlled, and the former communists even forcefully quelled a massive protest demonstration in 1990, by unleashing miners against civilian

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122 The project discusses the emergence and development of Romanian "second-generation communists" in the section on communist elite values.
123 See Lucan A. Way, "Authoritarian State Building and the Sources of Regime Competitiveness in the Fourth Wave: The Cases of Belarus, Moldova, Russia, and Ukraine", *World Politics* 57 (January 2005): 231-261, 232.
124 Ibid, 232, original emphasis.
125 One such example of elite disunity concerns the dispute between the traditional wing of the reformed communists, led by Ion Iliescu, and the reform-oriented wing controlled by technocrat Petre Roman.

protestors.[126] In his comparative study of incumbent elites in Russia, Ukraine, Moldova, and Belarus, Way notes that, in these countries, initial regime competitiveness evolved into increased regime closure and authoritarianism by the end of the 1990s, as former communists' elite capacity re-strengthened. Romania witnessed the reverse trend, as incumbent elites, initially strong and resourceful, underwent a gradual erosion of power.[127] Table 3.1 below illustrates some of the comparative trends in post-communist elite composition, and the corresponding evolution of civil society.

The table displays interesting shifts in the composition of post-communist elites. In the Czech Republic, Poland, and Hungary, managerial elites and humanistic intelligentsia provided essential pillars to the regime or governance props from the very beginning of the post-communist transition. In Romania, former nomenklatura communists with control over state resources faced the increasing but gradual challenge of increasingly professionalized elites, who were not reluctant to pursue economic reform. In Russia, Ukraine, Moldova, and Belarus, former communist elites made a strong comeback after initial losses, and must now contend with, both politically and economically, nationalist elites. The strength of civil society in these particular countries may reflect the growing power of critical intellectuals.

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126 Investigation over what happened during those days is ongoing. On January 25, 2006, former President Ion Iliescu was summoned to court by investigators of the 1990 "Mineriada," but he did not answer the summons.
127 Among the factors leading to this gradual erosion of power, major ones are power divisions among the incumbents (e.g., between Ion Iliescu and Adrian Nastase), persistent lack of know-how and expertise, weakening of communist-inherited informal networks, and reduced scope of state power over the economy as privatization made headway.

Table 3.1   Post-communist elite composition. A comparative look at Hungary, Poland, Czech Republic, Romania, Russia, Ukraine, Belarus, and Moldova

Country/ civil society score	Strength of civil society[128] (1-1.5 strong, 1.75-2.75 moderate, 3-7 low)	Post-communist elite composition
Poland 1.25 Hungary 1.25 Czech Republic 1.50	*Strong* (with pre-1989 roots) Supported by humanistic intelligentsia and western (EU) pressure	*Former communist managerial elite *Politocracy *Former intellectual dissidents
Romania 2.25	*Moderate* Supported by EU accession pressures and some internal initiative for reform	*Former nomenklatura communists *State dependent oligarchs *Increasingly, "know-how" managerial elites (with or without a communist past) with support from business and financial elites *Fragmented elements of former Securitate
Russia 4.75 Ukraine 3.00 Belarus 6.75 Moldova 4.00	*Mostly low* (with the exception of Ukraine, where recent Orange Revolution has combined civic awareness with nationalistic surge)	*Former nomenklatura communists *Former secret services elites (especially in Russia) *Oligarchs with government connections *Nationalist elites opposed to Russia (especially in Ukraine)

The table was compiled from works by Gil Eyal, Lucan Way, Catalin Augustin Stoica, data from Freedom House, and this author's own research on Romania.

3.2 The Incumbent/Establishment Elite and the Role of Critical Intellectuals

In comparison to Central and Eastern European leadership transitions, the first post-communist government in Romania lacked representation from truly independent and critical members of the intelligentsia elite who had opposed the previous regime.[129] Forcefully repressed or coaxed into serving the former regime[130], Romanian intellectuals could not evolve into an influential, well-networked elite, like elsewhere in Central Europe. Therefore, in Romania, where post-1989 intellectuals were clearly not in a position to negotiate a governing coalition, former

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128 Data on civil society development is adapted from Freedom House's research on civil society, with 1 representing the highest level and 7 the lowest level of democratic development. See http://www.freedomhouse.org/template.cfm?page=242&year=2005.

[129] This intelligentsia only constituted a small portion of the political forces that unseated Nicolae Ceausescu.

130 Shafir, *op cit.*

communists ran the first two post-1989 successive governments. They did so in an unimpeded fashion, blatantly exploiting state resources and the media, and surreptitiously weaving power networks. Technocratic and managerial elements in the state administration preferred to capitalize on their political, rather than their cultural, capital.[131] They did not exercise power based on their knowledge or expertise; instead, their continued control over state resources ensured their political power, and enabled them to initiate and control transitional reforms. In the process, former communists successfully transformed public property into private wealth, a pattern very similar to the one found in the Russian Federation. In the Russian case, former nomenklatura, "often in collaboration with Mafia-like groups, which are rumored to be composed of former KGB officers,"[132] controlled transition. Romanian intellectuals, weak after decades of communist repression, were consumed by internal rivalries[133] and rarely presented a united front, both before and after 1989.[134] The most notable exception to this political ineffectiveness came during the months after the 1989 Revolution, as critical intellectuals briefly became a community united behind the Timisoara Proclamation, the rally in Bucharest's University Square, and the Group for Social Dialogue (GDS), all dedicated to promoting democracy, against the newly-formed Iliescu government.[135]

It is important to distinguish between "intellectuals as legitimators and servants of the prevailing social order, on the one hand, and critical intellectuals, forces for changing the status quo,"[136] on the other hand. If this distinction was particularly important during communism, it is also relevant for the current elite environment. Romanian critical intellectuals remain (and many *choose* to remain) marginalized from top decision making, but control grassroots cultural and

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131 This is in contrast to the Central European situation, where post-communist managerial elites transformed their communist cultural capital (skills, know-how) into political power, as key members of the post-communist ruling coalitions. Eyal, *op cit.*

132 Eyal, *op cit*, 2. Way makes a similar point about Russian oligarchs. See Way, *op cit.*

133 Writing in 1999, Mungiu-Pippidi attributes these conflicts to ideological differences between the conservatives, the liberals, a non-descript left-oriented group, and the nationalist group. However, she also recognizes that personal rather than ideological differences largely account for the inability to unite either movement. See Mungiu-Pippidi, *op. cit.*, 93-94.

134 Again, this situation is in contrast to the role of intellectuals in Hungary, Poland, and the Czech Republic, where the anti-communist intellectual dissidents were strong enough to become governing partners after 1989.

135 For a detailed account of this brief and unsuccessful attempt by intellectuals to unite politically, see Mungiu-Pippidi, *op cit.*

136 Culic, *op cit*, 48.

civic institutions.[137] This strategy may bear fruit in the long run, as agents of civil society exert increasing pressure on Bucharest, but it effectively excludes critical intellectual from top-level decision making in the short term. On the other hand, establishment intellectuals operate among the country's central strategic elites, and support different partisan interests, without pushing for a change of the status quo, and content to legitimate the prevailing order.

As a potentially unified opposition group, critical intellectuals have put forth a successful presidential candidate in 1996 (Emil Constantinescu),[138] but despite this victory, they have yet to become one of the country's strategic elites. Part of the problem lies in their diffuse agenda and lack of commitment to practical goals. As Pippidi rightly observes, intellectuals suffer from a certain confusion about their own orientation: "Apart from a conviction that they are anti-communists and pro-European-but which Europe are they in favor of? That of the nineteenth century; 1968; or Maastricht? And would it be neo-liberal or social democratic-most Romanian intellectuals today would be hard put to explain what they stand for."[139] Therefore, even if, as Tismaneanu put it, "democratic intellectuals are needed in politics if this most ancient human affair is to be a more hospitable place for truth, trust, and tolerance,"[140] so far Romanian critical intellectuals have not had enough opportunities and/or willingness to play their moral role in politics.

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137 These critical intellectuals may fit into what Stoiciu calls 'the elitists'. He describes this group as originating from and controlling Romanian cultural institutions. The 'elitists' see themselves as the true representative of civil society. By calling them elitists, Stoiciu alludes to the group's moralizing, superior attitude, and their preference for working on the fringes of politics rather than actively involved in it. See Stoiciu, op cit. Romanian political analyst Vladimir Tismaneanu has explicitly called for a more active involvement of intellectuals in politics. Vladimir Tismaneanu, "Fighting for the Public Sphere: Democratic Intellectuals under Postcommunism," in Sorin Antohi and Vladimir Tismaneanu (eds.) Between Past and Future: The Revolutions of 1989 and their Aftermath (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2000).
138 President Emil Constantinescu (1996-2000) initially raised many hopes of change for those disillusioned with the outcome of the 1989 events; however, these hopes rapidly evaporated, as Constantinescu proved unable to fight the strong ex-communist networks of power.
139 Mungiu-Pippidi, op cit, 96.
140 Tismaneanu 2000, op cit, 169.

3.3 Economic Elites

While critical intellectuals were marginalized from the Romanian post-communist elite scene, former communists established themselves not only as the country's political leadership – in the form of the Social Democratic Party (first PDSR, then PSD[141]) and the Greater Romania Party (PRM) – but also in the emerging economic power group. The transition initially represented the tight collaboration between those wielding political and economic resources, supporting the political capitalism theory. The theory claims that in places where 1989 did not mean a radical rupture with the past, communist political capital was successfully transformed into economic capital (i.e., former nomenklatura took control of key economic positions in transition, and transformed state property into immense personal wealth). Therefore, the economic "winners" of the post-communist transition are the former communist nomenklatura, who are able to profit from the disappearance of the first-tier apparatchiki, by retaining or gaining key management control of former and current state-owned enterprises. As Pippidi states,

> In 1995 and 1996, the PDSR managed to form a real ruling class, which took control of key sectors of the economy and the state. Bureaucrats wanted to defend a bureaucratic state in order to maintain their lifestyles by selling their influence, new "capitalists" wanted to keep their monopolies and avoid real competition in a sort of state-favored companies' status (mostly against foreign competitors), and "entrepreneurial" politicians needed a slow, state-controlled privatization because this was the only way to make their fortunes. Despite this, the postcommunists proved rather pragmatic—their policy of maintaining strong state control was not due to their belief in the beneficial role of the state in leading an economy but rather in its use to embolden the privileges of the ruling class.[142]

This situation resembles the one in Russia, Ukraine, Belarus, and Moldova, where economic reform and privatization, although having reduced the scope of the government, "did *not* create a Western-style autonomous business class – but instead created a group of very rich 'oligarchs' who continued to depend on government connections."[143]

In addition to those elements of communist elites who secured key economic positions and attracted sizable privatization funds and subsidies, the economic power elite includes those

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[141] PSD was Ion Iliescu's party that has, under different names, led the executive from 1990-1996, and from 2000-2004, and controls key positions in parliament and the Constitutional Court. Moreover, PSD is widely recognized at the reformed communist party, formed of communist nomenklatura and possessing powerful ties with covert economic interests and former Securitate networks.

142 Alina Mungiu-Pippidi, "The Romanian Postcommunist Parties," in *The Communist Successor Parties of Central and Eastern Europe*, Andras Bozoki and John T. Ishiyama (eds.), *op cit*, 200.

143 Way, *op cit*, 250, original emphasis.

who were able to capitalize on their previous knowledge networks and connections. Stoica, who discusses the post-communist managerialism and political capitalism theories in the Romanian context, concludes that both continued political capital from the communist times and human and cultural capital, in the form of a technocratic education and organizational "know-how," matter significantly for post-communist economic elite formation.[144] Stoica's findings regarding Romanian economic elites thus suggest that former nomenklatura have succeeded in becoming top entrepreneurs not just because of their communist political positions, but also because of their organizational resources, network resources, and higher education.[145] Although it supports the political capitalism theory, this interpretation gives credit to other types of capital, rather than just political, in explaining the development of the post-communist economic elite in Romania. It makes a difference whether the current economic elite is composed of former top communists, or former top communists with technical educations, organizational skills, and solid knowledge networks. Indeed, it seems that the Romanian transition accommodated strategic elites that both capitalized on communist political capital, and also groups combining a reliance on political capital with utilization of symbolic, cultural capital (represented by a technical education, managerial know-how). Regardless of elite composition, the intimate relationship in Romania between economic strategic elites and the political class results in extensive exchange of influence between politicians and entrepreneurs, as well as a subjection of political decisions to economic interests rather than policy concerns.

The economic elites thus consist of incumbents in the state bureaucracy and administrative structures, as well as communist apparatchiks-turned businessmen. Those former communists that became businessmen underwent such conversion by using both political networks and relying on their managerial expertise. The economic strategic elites in Romania also include financial managers (many of them with a communist political past), owners of public and private financial institutions, media outlets, and industrial administration. These elements of the economic elite were supported and represented politically mainly by the former communist nomenklatura in FSN (then PSD, representing the more traditional, incumbent, ex-communists), and by the more technocratic faction present in the same party (FSN), as well as in the Democratic Party (PD). It is helpful here to introduce a typology of Romanian elites developed by Andrei Stoiciu. He classifies the Romanian power elite into 'populist-survivors', 'technocrats', 'nationalists', 'elitists', and 'passé-ists'.[146] Specifically, the 'populist-survivors' were present in

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144 Stoica, *op cit.*
145 Ibid, 271.
146 Stoiciu, *op cit.*

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FSN and then PDSR (now PSD) and espouse a rhetoric based on resistance to change and conservatism (although they labeled themselves as social-democrats). They are authoritarian, state-centric, and community-oriented, with an anti-individualistic nostalgia. They are populist, ethno-centric, resistant to foreign models, and present themselves as the only reasonable political force. The 'technocrats,' in turn, were present in FSN, and now most prominently PD. They have a rhetoric based on competence and professionalism, and claim a legitimacy based on superior administrative skills. Significantly, they posses greater political mobility than the 'populist-survivors.' While Stoiciu's typology is an excellent starting point for describing the composition of Romanian strategic elites, and the project will adopt his terminology of elite categories, one must go beyond ideal types and attempt a deeper understanding of interactions within and between these groups. Table 3.2 below summarizes some of Stoiciu's main observations regarding Romanian elite groups. The remainder of this chapter explores the deeper connections between Romanian strategic elites, linking Stoiciu's results with subsequent research and insights from the period after 1999. Additionally, by examining the conversions of capital characteristic to strategic elites, the project endeavors to present long-term trends in elite composition and interaction.

Table 3.2   A typology of Romanian elites

Elite types	Political representation	Rhetoric	Traits
Populist-survivors	FSN, then PDSR, PSD	social democracy, laced with resistance to change, ethno-centrism, and populism	Anti-individualistic State capitalism Promote stability through gradualism, moderation
Technocrats	FSN, then PD	competence, professionalism, superior administrative skills	Functional in their support for democracy Organized, want local entrepreneurship to boost market economy
Elitists	Ministerial consultants, political analysts	moral superiority, true representatives of civil society and Europeanism, above politics	Euro-Atlantic integration is the only solution to harmful nationalism and populism
Passé-ists	PNTCD (collapsed in 2000), PNL	legitimacy based on pre-communist system of values Shift from moralizing, critical, to populist, unified	Protection of national economy Economic and political interests must be separated Anti-Securitate
Nationalists	PRM	protection of collective myths, inspired by national communism	Resistant to change Legalist only when it corresponds to their goals Snug relationship with former Securitate

Adapted from Stoiciu.

Based on Stoiciu's classification and further investigation of the politico-economic arenas dominated by these groups, it appears that out of the five, the 'populist-survivors' and the 'technocrats' are the ones controlling most economic resources, media outlets, business lobbies, and state institutions in the country. Therefore, although the other three groups occupy interesting positions in the Romanian pyramid of strategic interests[147], their economic role is secondary to the two main groups. The spheres of influence of these two groups sometimes overlap, as both the 'populist-survivors' and the 'technocrats' come from and control state administration, and have been regularly present in government since 1989. It is significant to note that although both 'technocrats' and 'populist-survivors' have originated from the communist state administration and second and third-tier political leadership, after 1989 they took different approaches with

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147 The 'nationalists' arguably exert control over fragments of the former Securitate (secret police) networks. The 'elitists,' as discussed earlier, control numerous NGOs, pro-democratic think tanks and publications. The 'passé-ists' are capitalizing on their pre-communist political capital, which they have used in part to develop strong party allegiance for the PNL. PNL is currently a governing partner in Romania's parliamentary coalition.

regard to both economic and political leadership.[148] Economically, if the 'populist-survivors' have seized control of the industrial administration and retained power over major state institutions, both centrally and locally, the 'technocrats' focused on financial institutions and business associations and lobbies, and also encouraged local economic initiatives. The 'technocrats' seem to have embraced a more versatile, and even decentralized approach to economic power, whereas the 'populist-survivors' focus on preservation of privileges, and are content with retaining control over increasingly obsolete state assets.

Immediately after 1989, the 'populist-survivors' set up major state companies with monopolies in key economic sectors, including the 'regies'[149] of Renel, Romgaz, and Petrom. These giant economic entities enjoyed great autonomy from the state, were temporarily exempt from privatization, and were heavily subsidized.[150] During the democratic opposition's term (1996-2000), government attempts to restructure these highly inefficient 'regies'[151] failed under the pressure of those economic elites controlling these industries. The Renel incident, in particular, "revealed the continuing influence of the directors and managers of ailing state industries, known as 'the directocracy' (directocratii)."[152] While this directocracy had been a major component of the 'populist-survivor' elite under Iliescu, it continued to play a crucial decision-making role in privatization policy throughout the 1990s, slowing the sell-off of state assets. The subordination of policy decisions to strategic economic interests dominated the 1990s, affecting key decisions about privatization, dismantling of inefficient state enterprises, and openness to foreign investment.

The qualitative difference between the two types of economic capital – corresponding to the resources available respectively to 'populist-survivors' and 'technocrats' – becomes all the more important when it translates into political decisions. Those elites reliant solely on communist political capital, which is then converted to economic capital, wanted to preserve the status quo, whereas elites that transformed symbolic and cultural capital into innovative, progressive forms of economic capital, would advocate market reform, speedy privatization, and openness to foreign investment. This difference had already become apparent in the months after

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148 A split between a traditional/conservative wing and a more technocratic/reform-oriented of the former communist nomenklatura elite occurred shortly after 1989, and was symbolized by the rift between Ion Iliescu and Petre Roman. These two factions disagreed on the pace of privatization and the degree of state involvement in providing social security.
149 A regie was essentially a semi-autonomous domain.
150 Gallagher, *op cit*, 181.
151 Company records revealed that Renel's salaries accounted for 0.84% of GDP in 1999, but the company suffered losses of 1% of GDP in the same year. See *Nine O'Clock*, April 10, 2000, cited in Gallagher, *op cit*, 181.
152 Ibid, 182.

the revolution, when a younger, technocratic wing of the ruling FSN led by Petre Roman wanted to pursue some reform-oriented economic policy, while Ion Iliescu's wing was extremely reluctant to privatize. Much later, the 2004 national elections not only represented a political shift from a PSD-dominated government to a PNL-PD alliance (The Justice and Truth Alliance) but more profoundly, they represented the gradual shift in the composition of governing strategic elites. Namely, power shifted from groups that successfully converted their political capital after 1989 into both political and economic capital[153] to elite members who – regardless of political past – were able to convert or create their organizational know-how without utilizing state resources, and convert such skill into economic and political capital. The newly elected elite in 2004 had not previously enjoyed state control, and thus were compelled to rely upon professional skills. As a result of this change in governing elites, the balance of power has shifted towards more professionally competent political elite.

Table 3.3 below presents the politically relevant strategic groups in post-communist Romania. The first column summarizes the dominant rhetoric of the 'populist-survivors', 'technocrats', and 'passe-ists'. The second column maps the political party representation of these strategic elites, while the third column presents the main political orientation of the three groups, which often is very different from their official rhetoric. The fourth column, "official political power," illustrates the political parties' role in government throughout the post-communist period. Lastly, and perhaps most importantly, the last column follows the conversion of capital (political, symbolic, economic) specific to each strategic elite group, and sketches the corresponding conversion of resources.

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153 Represented mostly by the populist-survivors or the PSD-centered elite, and the nationalists, or the PRM-centered elite. However, passe-ist elements and members of PD also followed the political capitalism path.

Table 3.3   Romanian political elites (1990-2005): typology, orientation, and capital/resources

Strategic elite group Rhetoric	Political party	Main political orientation	Official political power	Conversion of capital, conversion of resources
Populist-survivors Rhetoric oscillating between populism/nationalism and support for democratic values Catch-all strategy: populist rhetoric disguises preservation of privileges	FSN, PDSR, PSD	state-centric very gradual approach to privatization moderate, but willing to ally with extremist elements	Key role in government 1990-1996 FSN,PDSR 2000-2004 PSD From 2004, major opposition party PSD	Communist political capital carried over into post-1989 period & converted into post-1989 economic capital Continued control of state institutions, state administration
Technocrats Rhetoric based on professionalism and market reform Sporadic elements of nationalism Commitment to democratization weakened by compromises with economic interests	FSN, PD	open to economic reform centralized bureaucratic fast approach to privatization	Present in government 1990-1992 FSN 1996-1999 PD coalition partner 2004-2006 PD	Communist political capital much weakened after 1989 Know-how/cultural capital converted into economic capital Newly acquired economic power converted into political capital, against populist-survivors' control over state resources
Passé-ists Shifting rhetoric, from monarchical restoration and a superior, pre-communist system of values, to a liberal, individual-centered social pact Solid moralizing approach, against corruption	PNTCD-collapsed in 2000, PNL, PD	center-right anti-communist moral revival based on lustration of former communist elements from politics and security services	Main role in the Romanian Democratic Convention CDR Constitutive presence in government 1996-2000 as CDR PNL+PNTCD coalition partner 2004-2006 PNL	Pre-communist political capital converted into post-communist political capital (but weak) Lower echelon communist political capital converted into higher-profile political capital

Categories, political party representation are adapted from Stoiciu. Main political orientation and conversion of capital & resources are compiled by this author, based on various secondary sources.

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3.4 Political Elites from 1990 to 2005

Politically, the former communist nomenklatura that seized power after 1989 included both the 'populist-survivor' group and the 'technocrats.' After 1989, the more conservative political elements, who formed the 'populist-survivors' (particularly the clique around President Ion Iliescu) antagonized the more moderate ruling elite factions (composed largely of technically skilled leaders). The 'populist-survivors' were represented by the National Salvation Front (FSN), later renamed the Democratic Social Party of Romania (PDSR), later the Social Democrats (PSD). Throughout their time in power, the populist-survivors modified their political approach and changed their programmatic perspective. Specifically, they gave up their initial commitment to social democracy and transferred their emphasis to a populist program, which mixed nationalism, usually paternalism, and appeal to traditional Romanian political culture. As their name suggests, the populist-survivors practice the policy of survival, through appeal to those values that are likely to gain them electoral success. This catchall political rhetoric often is internally contradicting, as its proponents espouse both pro-western, democratic values, and a commitment to tradition and nationalism. According to Gallagher, "a virtuous official rhetoric based around sham patriotism conceals the "grab-what-you-can" ethos which enables the new oligarchy to flourish."[154]

One of the biggest policy drawbacks of the populist-survivors was the delay of privatization, in the interest of preserving the lifelines between the party's interests and the nomenklatura-turned-managers of state enterprises. One interesting consequence of this collaboration was the emergence of powerful union interests, especially in the industrial sector, supporting the PSD. However, these union preferences did not represent the workers, but rather the upper management financed by a sympathetic regime. Trade union leaders have been described as the "puppets of interest circles," having built self-serving political and business ties.[155]

Writing in 2004, Tom Gallagher depicts a Romania almost entirely controlled by a PSD-led regime, "whose primary objective has been to reinforce vertical relations of domination and personal dependence and discourage social solidarity. The fact that such a process goes hand in hand with an attempt to create pluralist institutions, suggests that in many ways the democratizing

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154 Gallagher, *op cit*, 346.
155 See *Evenimentul Zilei*, "Romanian Report Details Political, Business Ties of Trade Union Leaders," trans. World News Connection, Nov. 14, 2005. http://wnc.dialog.com/.

experiment lacks substance."[156] While Gallagher recognizes that most minimal procedural conditions for democracy are in place in Romania, he warns of the dangers of the PSD ruling elite consolidating into a ruling oligarchy skilled at siphoning EU funds and controlling political and economic decision-making. Underestimating the strength of political opposition, Gallagher paints a picture of uncontested leadership on the part of a valueless, power-hungry elite, only interested in subordinating the state resources to its personal interests. Gallagher's view of the EU's role resembles that of an emergency-room mechanism pumping life into an otherwise defunct democracy. Although they point to worrying elite trends in Romania, his views, this author believes, are exaggerated. As reflected by the 2004 local and presidential elections, an opposition elite did gain enough power to oust PSD from government, and formed a coalition between the National Liberal Party (PNL) and the Democratic Party (PD).[157] However, just because non-PSD forces are now in power does not mean the end of intimate collaboration between political and economic interests. Scandals abound, linking the current prime minister and economic minister to non-transparent oil and gas energy deals,[158] and the president to an invisible yet powerful group of oligarchic interests.[159] Moreover, a year after the new government started its mandate, the European Union country report on Romania still perceived corruption as widespread, and the anti-corruption effort as seriously lacking.[160] While the current political leadership is subject to accusations of supporting the agendas of powerful economic circles, the allegations and scandals concerning illicit ties between the previous government and strategic economic and business interests also survive after PSD's 2004 electoral defeat. Romanians often see no difference between one government and another in terms of willingness to serve strategic economic interests and ignore public policy reform. However, a number of important qualifications are in order, as elite composition is shifting.

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156 Gallagher, *op cit*, 17.
157 The current governing coalition is formed around the Justice and Truth Alliance (DA) between the Democratic Party (PD) and the National Liberal Party (PNL). In addition to DA, the governing coalition also includes The Hungarians' Democratic Union (UDMR) and The Conservative Party (PC), as coalition partners.
158 See *Ziua*, "Gas Sharks," trans. World News Connection, Jan. 10, 2006. http://wnc.dialog.com/. The article details the scandal regarding the high price Romania pays for gas imported from Russia (allegedly higher than all other European countries).
159 See Adrian Severin, "'Communist Captain' Faced with Plural Oligarchy," *Ziua*, trans. World News Connection, Jan. 10, 2006. http://wnc.dialog.com/.
160 See *BBC Romanian*, "Domeniile cu probleme din raportul de tara," Oct. 26, 2005. www.bbc.co.uk/romanian. In November 2005, the Anticorruption National Department received 28 files regarding corrupt members of parliament. See *BBC Romanian*, "DNA a primit 28 de dosare vizand parlamentari," November 23, 2005. www.bbc.co.uk/romanian.

Starting from Stoiciu's typology, the political elites currently in power belong to the passé-ist and technocratic categories.[161] PD fits into the technocratic category, while PNL belongs to the passé-ist one (initially, as a junior partner of the Romanian Democratic Convention-CDR, then as a stand-alone political entity). It seems that elites devoted to populist and nationalist agendas and rhetoric have made room for technocrats, experts, and center-right conservatives. Unfortunately this categorization is too devoted to ideal types to account for nuances in elite composition. A year after taking over the government, the Truth and Justice Alliance (DA) – formed of the PNL-PD coalition and their governing partners, the Conservative Party (PC) and the Democratic Union of Hungarians in Romania (UDMR) – has been subjected to criticism for shifting towards populist policies after having taken a strong stand for liberal economic reform.[162] Nevertheless, the current government's first year in office has produced a much smaller dose of populism than that of previous governments, and many of the criticisms brought against the DA's inconsistent policies seek to rehabilitate the previous government's reliance on populist solutions. While some policies may indicate the incumbents' preference for populist solutions, others place them at the liberal end of the spectrum. Indeed, critics have accused the current government of "aggressive liberalism" that serves the interests of "governmental businessmen,"[163] particularly concerning the privatization of the National Lottery and the state press. In truth, the DA alliance (elected in 2004) has adopted a decisively more liberal approach to reform than its predecessor, but has yet to completely shake off the political elites' commitment to populist solutions. As a result, the current political elites have often displayed an inconsistent approach to reform and commitment to their own values. One year after taking office, it may be too soon to assess the overall direction of the DA Tariceanu government.

Beyond what appears to be an increased commitment to domestic policies and economic reform among the current leaders, as opposed to the PSD (who lost power in 2004), in some ways it has become less important to distinguish between ex-communists and pro-democracy elites, as all elements of the ruling class seem predisposed to organize around covert interests, and are prone to ally themselves with big business priorities. Moreover, while the executive is now dominated by members of the ruling coalition, the parliament is still chaired by prominent PSD members. For example, PSD's Adrian Nastase chairs the Chamber of Deputies and PSD's Teodor

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161 Stoiciu, *op cit.*

162 See Adriana Tomasevici, "Liberal Government Has Inclined Left: Government Members Find It Easier to Agree on Populist Steps Fit for Social Democratic Government," *Evenimentul Zilei*, trans. World News Connection, Dec. 21, 2005. http://wnc.dialog.com/.

163 See Mihai Tanasescu, "Pessimism at the Beginning of the Year," *Ziua*, trans. World News Connection, Jan. 11, 2006. http://wnc.dialog.com/.

Melescanu chairs the Senate, and former nomenklatura are still in key economic positions. Also, the Constitutional Court is dominated by pro-PSD appointees who are quick to block most proposals by the coalition government.

However, one important difference between the populist-survivors and the current alliance of technocrats and passé-ists (or, in other words, the difference between PSD and DA) is that people who have succeeded in politics today have done so outside of established institutions and the assistance of networks and often hindered by those elites controlling the institutional networks and resources. Indeed, the current top elite in Romania had to fight against the PSD elite composed of the 'populist-survivors'. This victory of new elites, composed of previously non-establishment elements, has been accomplished against great odds. The non-establishment elites have had to fight for friendly media coverage, access to electoral and campaign funds, and to develop a cohesive position when facing the almost unchallenged PSD party elite. One hopes that the present elite, having taken power despite their considerable disadvantage, have won this political fight through greater expertise, willingness to adapt and accept changes, and by gaining skills useful for Romania's transition. Moreover, the hope is that they will have established new norms and methods for elite competition and advancement in Romania. Of course, it should be recognized that in order to climb to the top of the political pyramid, non-establishment elites have had to make compromises with business circles interested in securing a friendly lobby in government. But the overall character of elite change has been more promising in recent years. Thus, on the one hand, the current political elites owe their present positions to cultural capital and expertise; on the other hand, they financed their political ambitions by forging some unholy alliances with business and financial interests (i.e., that is, the same tactics which PSD had utilized.) The improvement lies in the current elites' willingness to work with privatized, market interests, while PSD had stubbornly insisted on prolonging a defunct state economy.

3.5 Incumbent Party Elites and Institutions

While the DA alliance encourages market reform and appears guided more by expertise than by "old boys" networks, other elite characteristics suggest continuity with the previous government. Charges have already been brought by the previously ruling PSD that Romanian President Traian Basescu (the leader of the DA and the former mayor of Bucharest) is turning into an authoritarian oligarch, wanting to rule not only "above the parties, but especially without

them."[164] Moreover, independent observers have repeatedly pointed out the president's violations of constitutional provisions concerning the separation of powers, because of his involvement with party politics and domestic policy decisions. However, the president has managed to preserve an image of integrity, and has repeatedly professed his intention to fight the "big fish" of corruption and build a clean business environment, free of economic exchange of influence over political decisions. The same cannot be said of his prime minister, Calin Popescu-Tariceanu who, less than a year after taking office, was entangled in a conflict of influence scandal based on his judicial intervention for his friend, Petrom oil company director Dinu Patriciu.[165] But it seems that even if the close collaboration between economic and political strategic elites persists, the power dynamic has modified somewhat. With a president openly stating his priority to fight interest circles and corrupt networks, and making appointments in intelligence agencies from among former military cadres, it appears that the political elites have acquired a stronger hold on power, and are no longer subordinated to economic interests. Rather, the relationship between economic and political strategic interests seems to progress on a more equal footing. This is due partly to the current power's moderate control over and preference for military and informational services, partly to the increased role and importance of the rule of law, and also to the strong EU pressures to eradicate corruption. Overall, the current political leadership is more careful in engaging in conflicts of interest, although the "big fish" of corruption investigations have yet to be pursued.

In terms of party development, the current DA coalition is an alliance of two main parties, the National Liberals and the Democrats (PNL, PD) and the smaller coalition partners, namely the Conservatives and the ethnic Hungarians. Both PNL and PD had been members of the previous governing coalition, between 1996 an 2000. PD had been a destabilizing force in the earlier coalition, taking anti-minority positions on a number of occasions (which it still does, raising objections to the minority law currently under discussion), opposing agricultural privatization, and in general supporting policies that went against its own platform. However, these inconsistencies were mostly a result of ex-leader Petre Roman's political ambitions and his attempts to appease the wide-ranging demands of potential supporters. Under current leader Emil

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[164] See *Ziua*, "Crisis as a Governing Method," trans. World News Connection, Dec. 21, 2005. http://wnc.dialog.com/.

[165] Prosecutors are again investigating allegations that Rompetrol President Dinu Patriciu, and a bevy of political and journalistic personalities (including the current prime minister, the president of the Bucharest wing of the National Liberal Party, a Hungarian Party senator, and top journalists of the Academia Catavencu political weekly) have manipulated the stock market and earned personal profits illegally. See *BBC Romanian*, "Bancile refuza sa faca dezvaluiri in cazul Rompetrol," Jan. 12, 2006. www.bbc.co.uk/romanian.

Boc, the party's internal organization and consistent recruitment behavior have contributed to its current image as a stabilizing coalition member. Stefan's analysis of political recruitment patterns singles out PD as the only Romanian mainstream party with a functional decentralized structure, where "the main pillars are the local 'veterans'. These party politicians are key people in the party, also because they have a lot of experience in local administration, in most of the cases since the early days of 1990."[166] The PD's reliance on local members for central representation and government is the exception to the norm of Romanian party politics: that is, the overabundance of centrally trained politicians "parachuted" into local positions where they have no expertise. Therefore, the PD represents a positive development in the interaction between central and local political elites; unfortunately, it is the exception to the worrying centralizing trend that accounts for the existence of two Romanias, one dominated by a Bucharest elite and the other one subjected to the whims of local barons.

PNL's post-1989 history has been a volatile one. Between 1990 and 1996, PNL struggled to live up to its historical legacy but was increasingly factionalized and powerless, with no parliamentary representation between 1992 and 1996. In 1996, PNL became a constitutive junior partner of the Romanian Democratic Convention (CDR), where it had no separate identity, but at least it secured parliamentary representation. Its tumultuous post-1989 history took a turning point in 1996-97, when PNL started reuniting its splinter factions and merging with other liberal formations.[167] Today, PNL is a strong party relying almost exclusively on a group of national leaders with high political visibility. Through its overly centralized approach to local governance, PNL stands opposite to its major alliance partner, PD. Neither party is open to accepting members from other political families, displaying what Stefan calls conservative patterns of recruitment. The disastrous end of the 1996-2000 governing coalition, which included both PNL and PD, raises fears that PNL and PD will not succeed in accommodating each other during the current government, thus becoming another divided and powerless coalition. Although a year of governance does not provide enough time for an assessment, so far the coalition has had both ups and downs, disagreeing on numerous occasions[168] but expressing a willingness to work those differences out. Past lessons may prove useful in keeping this coalition together, but internal disagreements make it harder to concentrate on reform goals.

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[166] Stefan 2004, *op cit*, 241.

[167] Ibid, 245.

[168] See *BBC Romanian*, "Divergente in Alianta," Nov. 14, 2005. www.bbc.co.uk/romanian.

While institutional politics are becoming more established, appointments based on personalized relationships and economic interest rather than institutional needs are still the norm. The operational leader of The National Information Community—CNI, a newly created consultative body, reuniting experts and resources from all of Romania's information services—was a personal friend of President Basescu. After the president had indicated appointments will probably be members of civil society, he named a general[169] as the top CNI official, raising speculations on his close relationships with military and security circles of interest. Notwithstanding the persistence of personalized relationships and clientelistic networks, democratic institutions are surviving and strengthening. In particular, the Romanian Ministry of Justice is becoming a visible arbiter of elite interactions. Another institute in charge of investigating the crimes of communism was formed,[170] but skeptics dub it another symptom of the "forms without foundation" syndrome plaguing Romanian politics.[171] However, it is possible that in Romania forms precede foundations, rather than precluding them. In order to understand the relationship between strategic elites and pluralist institutions, as well as the role of elites for democratization, it is useful to examine the way elites organize themselves and interact within formal and informal institutions. Before taking a closer look at the relationships and organization of Romania's strategic elites, it is important to mention a key component of these elites: the security and intelligence elites.

3.6 The Securitate and its Political Role Today

Since 1989, the persistent role of the Romanian secret police, namely the Securitate, in influencing (if not coercing) political and implicitly, economic decision-making, has been discussed again and again. An understanding still exists, among analysts and the general public, that the big battles between different strategic elites are still, to a certain extent, fought over the informational and network resources of the secret police. After its official demise in 1989, the Securitate lived on, reincarnated in the form of the Romanian Information Service (SRI) and its various subsidiaries. Now, more than sixteen years after the revolution, most secret police files are still sealed, and speculation over the continuous influence of former top agents on political decision-making abound. The files of the Dunarea Company, a screen for the commercial

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[169] See *BBC Romanian*, "Cine ar trebui sa controleze CNI?," Dec. 1, 2005. www.bbc.co.uk/romanian.

[170] See Mihai Mincan, "Communist Criminals to Jail," *Evenimentul Zilei*, trans. World News Connection, Jan. 5, 2006. http://wnc.dialog.com/.

[171] See *BBC Romanian*, "Nou Institut de Investigare a Crimelor Comunismului," Dec. 22, 2005. www.bbc.co.uk/romanian

activities of the Securitate, have been sealed until 2013, despite clear evidence that some of the current governing elites (including Conservative Party leader, Dan Voiculescu) were involved with its activities. It appears that different groups of strategic elites control fragments of the former informational network, and use these resources as political ammunition against their opponents.

In addition to its policing role, the former Securitate amassed a large amount of information and developed intelligence networks that may function as an informal institutional backbone to strategic elites' interests. This kind of cultural capital is still placed at high value in Romania's current political environment. Political scandals attributed to former Securitate leaks have affected the careers of several politicians, accused of having cooperated with the secret police during the communist regime. Part of the problem with the persisting power and influence of former Securitate informational networks concerns the broad interpretation of the term "informer,"[172] which lumps together minor collaborators with key spy figures. Once a political figure is accused of having been a communist informer, the burden of proving innocence may be overwhelming. Until the archives are examined by uninvolved analysts and old networks done away with, the former Securitate will continue to exist, both as a reminder of the recent past, and as a hunted informational and power resource.

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[172] Dennis Deletant makes this point in his writings on the Romanian secret police before and after 1989. See Dennis Deletant, "Ghosts from the Past: Successors to the Securitate in Post-Communist Romania," in *Post-Communist Romania: Coming to Terms with Transition*, Duncan Light and David Phinnemore (eds) (New York: Palgrave, 2001).

4. RELATIONSHIPS AND ORGANIZATION
OF DIFFERENT STRATEGIC ELITES

The composition of post-communist Romanian strategic elites indicates that strong technocratic elements – important in the transition from communism, as demonstrated by the theory of post-communist managerial elites developed for Central Europe – have emerged within Romania's decision making circles. This move is much belated in Romania, as countries such as the Czech Republic, Poland, and Hungary experienced the rise of technocratic/managerial elites even before 1989, and certainly in the early post-communist years. Furthermore, many of the factors that supported the development of a transformed ruling class in Central European countries are still missing (or appear very weak) in Romania. Specifically, the lack of politically active critical intellectuals, the prolonged domination of nomenklatura (traditional communist) elite elements, the survival and political influence of former Securitate factions, and the fractionalization of most reform-oriented elites place Romania closer to Russia's elite patterns than those of the Central European countries. However, whereas in Russia power appears concentrated within a tight elite circle, (that also controls the information services and the major economic enterprises)[173] Romanian strategic elites are highly fragmented and display intense competition for domination. Battles revolve around political power (regarding both parties and national decision-making), control of the information services, the politically salient aspects of privatization, spheres of economic influence, and whether to make concessions to the electorate and the European Union.

In addition to identifying the groups that make up Romania's ruling class, it is important to understand the relationships between different elite circles, as well as their patterns of organization. As Sorin Adam Matei points out in his book on intellectual elites,[174] a close linkage exists between the values and features of elite groups, on the one hand, and their organization and relationships, on the other hand. His views may be extended to encompass Romania's strategic elites, or the decision-makers of the transitional period. While some of Matei's findings reassert

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[173] There, the political capitalism theory appears best supported by actual elite behavior. See, for example, Olga Kryshtanovskaya and Stephen White, "Losing Power in Russia," *Journal of Communist Studies and Transition Politics*, 21(2): 200-222, 2005, and Way, *op cit.*

[174] Matei, *op cit.*

themselves in the sphere of political elites and economic elites, discrete elements of interaction between these groups also emerge upon closer analysis.

Studying what he calls paramodern prestige groups, Matei believes that "the survival and force of prestige groups is based on monopoly."[175] What is true for his closed groups of intellectual elites applies also to economic and political strategic elites. The intellectual elites' monopoly over knowledge-based resources and tangible cultural values (bookstores, newspapers, magazines, think tanks) is analogous to the entrepreneurial/ex-communist monopoly over economic resources. Both paramodern intellectual elites and former communist elites that transformed their political capital into economic might seem unable to cope with unrestricted competition. Without their continued monopoly over cultural, economic, and political capital, they could not maintain their elite positions. A true marketplace of ideas, as well as a functioning market economy, may mean the end of closed, paramodern strategic elites. So far, however, these groups have coped well with the demands and changes of post-communism, and have even managed to turn them to their advantage. In particular, those groups with a 'populist-survivor' orientation that clustered around the Social Democratic Party – be they members of the local and central administration, politicians, managers of state and semi-private companies – have deliberately undermined and distorted reforms in order to extend their domination over state-derived resources. Today these groups are being challenged, mostly by factions that do not fear the forces of privatization, and are willing to play out their power struggles within a reformed environment. The more modernized and flexible strategic groups were able to accumulate 'know-how' and turn it into economic and political capital. Nevertheless, the existing monopolies of political and economic elites will continue as long as the process of economic reform (and its political counterparts, pluralism and democratic rules) remains fragmented and tentative. The situation is further complicated by the willingness of all strategic elites – including the technocrat groups now in power, establishment intellectuals, and private sector economic elites - to at least partially accommodate this hybrid system of state-market interdependence. Thus, the status quo is perpetuated by both those groups holding the monopolies (facilitated by control over state resources and administrative structures) and those fighting for access to these resources from outside the monopolies.

The success of strategic power groups that are wary of systemic change is partly explained by their ability to mix traditional and modern values and ideas, which is why Matei calls these groups 'paramodern.' As he points out, "the ideas of privilege and closed group,

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[175] Ibid, 26.

characteristic of aristocracy, have survived long after 1860, the year that marked Romania's first separation from the traditional world."[176] Both intellectual elites and the political class have a propensity to mix old and new methods of promoting their own social positions and power bases. Through their partial accommodation of reform, these strategic power groups pave their way into the future. Many Romanian decision-making strategic elites, similar to the intellectuals, are unwilling and/or unable to cope with the sudden changes of transition without the help of surviving cultural, institutional, or network props. On the other hand, technocratic elites that have gradually strengthened their power base, either economically, politically, or intellectually, outside of the establishment values, may be more motivated to make the leap from traditional to modern, because they have an interest in breaking the monopolies. Nevertheless, the temptation to mix traditional and modern values remains strong for the political technocrats, because elections have to be won and they are more likely to rely on tested rhetoric and policies (oftentimes populist, nationalist, and paternalistic) than to proceed with economic and social reform at the expense of popular support. Thus, elements of survival politics are visible among all strategic elites, but in varying degrees. Specifically, the reliance on a mix of traditional and modern values appears stronger among the 'populist-survivors', 'nationalists', state-dependent oligarchs, and to some extent the 'passé-ists', than among the 'technocrats', managerial elites, business groups and former Securitate factions.

Consistent with Matei's findings, it appears that strategic elites, regardless of their type, prefer to organize themselves around a personality-leader rather than based on policy goals or around institutions. As a result, conflicts are the norm within the same institutions, and personalized relationships make for volatile pacts. For example, the Social Democratic Party is currently divided among three factions, each grouped around a personality-leader: the party chairman Mircea Geoana, the former prime minister and current Chamber of Deputies chairman Adrian Nastase,[177] and the former Romanian president and honorary party chairman, Ion Iliescu. These factions do not hold different views on the party platform or policy priorities; rather, they

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[176] *Ibid*, 33.

[177] In January 2006, PSD Executive Chairman Adrian Nastase self-suspended himself from the party, in the midst of an anti-corruption investigation that probes into the former prime minister's huge wealth.

form the power base for the leader's political and personal ambitions.[178] Another example concerns the National Liberal Party, divided between members loyal to Prime Minister Calin Popescu-Tariceanu and those opposing him. Organization around personal relationships reduces the importance of party lines and institutional barriers, resulting in cross-institutional partnerships and friendships, for example between a business mogul, the prime minister and the justice minister.[179]

The entourage of political leaders (whom the media describes as mafia bosses, medieval clan leaders, or local barons) can often be described as an informal circle of power recruited outside political mechanisms. This organizational pattern reduces transparency, and raises questions about the invisible influence exerted by non-elected political and administrative advisors over political leaders. Because the post-1989 relationship between the executive and the multi-layered bureaucracy has not yet been clarified, state administrators may possess and exert tremendous influence over elected politicians. This phenomenon is probably exacerbated by the tendency of MPs to consider their political commitments part-time jobs, and to continue business or professional careers while in office (in a recent Romanian poll, 71 percent of respondents said that businessmen who want to become politicians should completely give up their business, 52 percent did not think a businessman is capable of becoming also a good politician, and 56 percent believe the main reason Romanian politicians have chosen their profession is to make more money[180]). Given the number of their non-political commitments, political leaders may rely excessively on experts and advisors. Networks may become institutionalized and a political leader may listen more to a bureaucrat in his/her entourage than to colleagues in parliament, government, or other institutions. This phenomenon is not unique to Romania. In his comparative study of the revival of authoritarianism in Russia, Ukraine, Belarus, and Moldova, Lucan A. Way notes: "strong formal or informal organizations – such as political parties, well-established patron-client relationships, or large quasi-familial networks – have often provided important

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[178] Recent developments suggest that Nastase's power base is dwindling rapidly. Involved in corruption scandals and unable to provide reasonable explanations for the sources of his wealth, Nastase may be sacrificed by the other power factions, thus becoming the party's scapegoat and ensuring that PSD survives politically with a cleansed image. For analyses of what is happening to Nastase, see *Ziua*, "PSD has had enough of Nastase's fortune," trans. World News Connection, Jan. 13, 2006, http://wnc.dialog.com/; and *Romania Libera*, "Iliescu washes his hands like Pontius Pilat," trans. World News Connection, Jan. 18, 2006. http://wnc.dialog.com.

[179] This is known as the "Telefonul" scandal, involving businessman Dinu Patriciu, Prime Minister Calin Popescu-Tariceanu, and Justice Minister Monica Macovei.

[180] See *Rompres*, "Some 56% of Romanians believe their politicians chose their occupation to make more money," trans. World News Connection, Jan. 30, 2006. http://wnc.dialog.com/

mechanisms to reduce defections."[181] In turn, in their study of managerial elites in Central and Eastern Europe, Eyal, Szelenyi, and Townsley identify informal knowledge networks as an important source of cultural capital, whose owners can convert it into economic or political capital.[182]

Clientelistic networks of information and power are so entrenched that they become informal institutions operating in parallel with the incipient pluralist framework. Independent of their values, the way elite groups are organized impacts on their ability to make decisions and pursue policy agendas. In another worrying trend, most decisions affecting the entire country are taken by groups of centrally-based elites, with little consultation or input from local decision-makers. Visible in virtually all political institutions, including parties[183] and parliament, the polarization of national and local elites accounts for two Romanias: the political country, represented by centralized elites (political, economic, intellectual), and the real country, where local "barons" treat their political and administration posts as their own, private domains and exert unrestrained political and economic control. The rise to power of local barons who are often appointees of the former PSD government raises fears that Romania will become more and more subjected to oligarchic interests that bypass laws and institutions to amass huge wealth. One author even goes as far as to suggest that the EU may be encouraging the rise to power of local 'barons'. Gallagher thus writes: "It will be fascinating to observe if the EU preference for concentrating rural holdings in the interests of efficiency has the unintended result of reviving the boier class of landowners, this time drawn from ex-communist oligarchs."[184] Although many of these 'boyars' obtained their positions during PSD governments, they continue to thrive, given Romania's centralized political environment. To narrow the gap between the political center and local politics, Romania's national political elites need to make deliberate attempts to create strong local representation and improve the communication links between national and local politics. Otherwise, the polarization of local and central politics is likely to perpetrate itself, especially as elites constantly bypass institutional mechanisms for improved representation (such as political parties and the Romanian Parliament). The informal ties between political and economic strategic elites may actually improve communication between central leadership and local

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[181] Way, op cit, 236.

[182] See Eyal et al, op cit.

[183] As pointed out by Stefan, in his analysis of recruitment patterns for parties and parliament, national elites are sometimes "parachuted" locally by the political center. See Stefan 2004, op cit.

[184] Gallagher, op cit, 343.

political interests, but these informal networks may also reinforce the political gap with an economic one.

In a transitional political environment where pluralism and clientelism coexist, elite socialization occurs through a mix of institutional and personalized channels. Some stages of elite socialization take place through interactions in institutions such as parliament and political parties. Given the need to rejuvenate electoral politics (often dominated by leaders who were prominent during the inter-war or communist periods), younger politicians are being groomed. Observers, however, have noted a tendency for young politicians to groups themselves along the interests of a powerful senior politician, rather than based on their political platform or along institutional lines.[185] Such organizational patterns sustain an anachronistic political culture and prevent substantive elite interactions; instead, they promote personalized loyalties around charismatic leaders. Fickle loyalties engender an unstable political environment where fortunes can change overnight and it is best to ally oneself with the strongest player. An example of this instability is former Prime Minister Adrian Nastase's recent and sudden political decline, following what the media dubbed the "aunt Tamara" scandal. The surprise is not the corruption allegations, which are widespread in the Romanian media and concern a great number of political and business figures, but instead the speed, timing, and manner in which Nastase fell from grace. A scandal so big that foreign diplomats refer to it in detail when raising objections to Romania's EU accession, the "aunt Tamara" affair proves the volatility of Romanian top politics, as well as the importance of personal connections and vendettas in deciding the fate of high-ranking politicians. Although Nastase's wealth has been a subject of speculation and media attention for years[186], his investigation took off in a matter of weeks and probably ended his political career. While optimists point out the increasing role of the Romanian judicial system in denouncing the "big fish" of entrenched corruption, a more realistic view places Nastase's scandal at the juncture of PSD in-party fighting, the need to appease EU, the current government's struggle to discredit the PSD opposition, and lastly, the growing power and independence of the Romanian judiciary.

Overall, an examination of the relationships between Romanian strategic elites reveals an ongoing struggle for power, but the political environment displays an increasingly balanced political formula. Challenges are growing against what has often been described in the past as a

[185] See *Evenimentul Zilei*, "Young Politicians Protected by Old Ones – Younger Generation Promoted for Fidelity to Party Leaders" trans. World News Connection, December 27, 2005. http://wnc.dialog.com.

[186] In 2002, an anonymously released report named Armageddon II detailed Nastase's personal wealth, his links with controversial businessmen, and his tendencies for grandiose, almost sultanistic power-building.

PSD oligarchy. Serious talks of a merger between the main ruling coalition parties, PNL and PD, may lead to the creation of a strong party that can govern without the aid of a destabilizing coalition. Thus, the future landscape of Romanian politics may be dominated by PSD and the merged PNL-PD formation.

However, covert interest groups (often referred to by Romanian President Traian Basescu) continue to dominate political decisions, and the judiciary is of yet too weak to effectively fight and expose corrupt deals between businessmen and politicians. There are signs that the judicial system is fighting against domination by the executive, but informal networks between economic and political groups are likely to thrive in the future. The role of the EU in shaping the composition and interaction of strategic elites, as well as consequences for Romanian development, are outlined in the concluding section of this project.

5. CONSEQUENCES FOR DEVELOPMENT
AND CONCLUSION

Romanian post-communist strategic elites operate in a transitional environment dominated by domestic challenges to development, but also characterized by the demands of EU accession and the increasing pressures of globalization. Of the international factors, impending EU membership and preparations for joining the Union probably exert the largest influence on Romanian strategic elites. Consequently, the evolving composition of post-communist elites, as well as their approach to Romania's development goals, is to some extent shaped by EU involvement. The nature of this involvement is subject to debate. Writing in 2004, Tom Gallagher depicted the EU as an important, but not necessarily positive influence in Romania. He thus concluded his book on Romania's evolution since communism:

> It will be ironic if the principal outcome of the EU's engagement with Romania is decisively to consolidate the influence of a ruling elite that regrouped upon the fall of communism in 1989 *(namely, the politico-economic cluster of power surrounding the PSD)*. If this happens, the EU will be reinforcing the historical traditions and methods that have made Romania synonymous with bad governance throughout much of its history.[187]

Since the time of Gallagher's writing, a political opposition took power in Romania in 2004, ousting the long-reign of PSD governments. But do this political opposition, and the rest of strategic elites currently operating in Romania[188], represent a change for the better, or will the new power holders simply reinforce the pattern established by what Gallagher calls the PSD oligarchy? While the shift in composition and behaviour of strategic elites is not spectacular, some changes have already happened, and others are very probable.

Although Gallagher thinks that "Romania appears to be far away from witnessing the break up of the ruling structures which interests from the communist era painstakingly created in the 1990s and further refined with the help of EU money and turncoat figures after 2000,"[189] in reality these ruling structures are more complex than they might appear. As noted in the third

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[187] Gallagher, *op cit*, 355. emphasis added.

[188] As presented in earlier chapters, these groups include business circles with various political affiliations, Securitate factions, PSD-controlled political and economic arenas, and the local 'boyars'' strongholds.

[189] Gallagher, *op cit*, 353.

chapter on elite composition, the incumbent political elites posses a willingness to work within reformed institutional and economic structures. Moreover, governing elites have demonstrated their ability to stand up to the entrenched, 'populist-survivor' networks of power, although this confrontation is largely occurring outside institutional mechanisms. In other words, the current governing coalition in Romania has perhaps displayed the capacity to beat the 'populist-survivors' at their own game, rather than through democratic methods. The PNL-PD political formula appears to be holding on to power, despite systematic attacks form the PSD (now the official opposition) and frequent internal squabbles. Moreover, a PNL-PD merger increasingly looks like a distinct possibility, rather than mere electoral fodder. It is clear, however, that the "alliance between the PNL and the PD is a marriage based on interests, not on love. There is a major political interest that the two parties represent a center-right political force capable of counterbalancing the PSD."[190] Therefore, it appears that a viable center-right political option is emerging, one that may stand up to the PSD challenge. But while ability to survive in office represents progress from the political opposition's first governing attempt in 1996, it is not enough to fulfill the country's challenging development goals. Will the governing strategic elites rise to the challenges of EU accession and, more importantly, to the demands of Romania's developmental needs?

The answer is two-fold. First, by providing a strong, sustainable alternative to the 'populist-survivors', both through their political strategy and through their alliances with business and entrepreneurial interests, the 'technocrats' and 'passé-ists' now in power have already pushed Romania forward. The current governing elites have recognized, at least in part, the need to promote economic reform and private initiative, and reduce the socialist-scale state involvement in development. The balance of politico-economic relationships between strategic interests has shifted in favor of the political elites, and the danger of business interests taking over political decision-making is, for the moment, contained. Pushed by the EU, the current governing elites are taking judicial reform more seriously and pursuing big cases of corruption.[191] However, scandals abound over secret deals between ministers and businessmen, and many Romanians are

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[190] PNL Deputy Teodor Melescanu, as quoted in *OSC Report* "Roundup: Romanian Dailies Report on PNL Officials' Reactions to PD Merger Idea," trans. World News Connection, February 9, 2006. http://wnc.dialog.com.
[191] In recent examples, the political pursuit of PSD "big fish" and former ministers like Adrian Nastase, Dan Ioan Popescu, and Rodica Stanoiu, is matched by the current government's own display of fair play, as demonstrated by President Traian Basescu's offer to be first investigated himself for corruption allegations in the "Fleet" file.

convinced that their country is governed by powerful interest groups that operate behind the curtains.

Second, while the composition of Romania's ruling class has shifted somewhat, its values and attitudes have changed too little to warrant much hope that the country's progress towards pluralism and democratic institutions will pick up significant pace. Authoritarianism, preference for personalized, clientelistic networks, and mock commitment to democratic institutions, are still key elements of elite behaviour. On the plus side, the ultranationalist rhetoric and populist-style solutions to long-term problems have subsided,[192] as governing elites have so far chosen other mobilizing tactics. Most importantly, impending EU membership is pressing political elites to re-assess their attitudes to democratic values, and to consider political consultation with opponents and governing partners. This process is slow and will take time to bear fruit, especially because it is driven by factors outside Romania, more than by domestic civic pressures. Nevertheless, elites may be more convinced by pressure from international donors and the EU than by domestic civil society advocates. Doubtless, domestic grassroots pressure is essential for long-term value development, but civic groups and critical intellectual elites are slow to organize and effectively lobby the top elites.

All Romanian strategic elites, be it the 'populist-survivors' or the 'technocrats', organize themselves around personal networks or interest groups, where the boundaries between economic and political control are often blurred. However, the role of institutions is slowly becoming more established. There are two simultaneous processes happening, going in different directions. While informal elite networks are, to a certain extent, mutually reinforcing, they are becoming less attractive and riskier as pluralist institutions strengthen. Moreover, as time goes by, communist-inherited informal networks are continuously weakening. At this stage, institutions are still inefficient, but they are not risky, and it is possible that elites will start relying and organizing less around informal networks and more around formal institutions, by necessity rather than choice. In post-communist Romania, the institutionalization of pluralism is slowly beginning to overshadow traditional elite patterns of interaction.

Romania's strategic elites are increasingly composed of more technocratic elements, many of which have been socialized in a semi-democratic environment, exposed to the benefits of

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[192] The debate surrounding minority rights has suffered a recent democratic setback. Under EU pressure, Romania must adopt a minority statute, which would cover most legislation on minority rights. However, the Democratic Party (PD), a key member of the ruling coalition, opposes the proposed minority statute. PD claims that the statute would result in preferential treatment for minorities based on nationality rather than fair treatment based on competencies. Tensions are also rising surrounding the increased electoral support for the ultra-nationalist Greater Romania Party (PRM).

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economic and social reform, and are eager to please Brussels. As interactions between the country's political class and the EU environment become more frequent, the development of a Brussels oriented, "European" elite group among Romanian elites is inevitable. As a result, younger, better trained elements will begin staffing top political and administrative positions, and will in turn want to surround themselves with like-minded professionals. Although currently it is a definite drawback, the conspicuous absence of Romania's younger generation from political engagement will soon be remedied as demand for it increases dramatically. Romania has always been geographically in Europe, but today the country is on the cusp of developing a highly Europeanized elite.

A skilled political class is an absolute necessity in present day Romania. Given the weakness of institutions, the Romanian political elite must fulfill greater responsibilities than in established democracies, where elites are constrained (but also assisted) by institutional mechanisms. Additionally, the country's international climate requires maneuvering with great care, between EU imperatives, the unstoppable forces of globalization and the need to nourish a vulnerable economic, social, and political environment. The political class finds itself caught between the need to satisfy the electorate (whose dissatisfaction is likely to grow once the unpleasant effects of EU integration hit with full force) and the reforms that will pay off in the long run. Unfortunately, so far, the political class has been making either the easy choice, by engaging in populist-style governance, or the unacceptable choice, of ignoring both the short-term demands of the electorate and Romania's long-term needs.

In conclusion, one crucial reason why it is so hard to predict the future path of elite development in Romania, as well as its role in transition, is because although important in themselves, changes in elite composition must also be accompanied by an evolution of values, in order to produce the necessary leadership for viable transition to a democratic system and a free economy. That is why it may take a considerable period of time to identify changes in leadership style that have real consequences for development, even if substantial changes in elite composition and background have already taken place.

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