Bowling Almost Alone:

Political Participation in a New Democracy*

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Democracy is easy, John Mueller (1999) writes. Take away the guns of authoritarian thugs and people quite naturally take to participating in their political systems. They take to the streets and demand that government heed their demands. As Willy Loman's wife in Arthur Miller's play <u>Death of a Salesman</u>, said: "Attention must be paid."

But democracy seems to be easier in some places than others and at some times more than others–and for some political activities more than others. Political participation has been declining in the United States, but rising in Western Europe (Putnam, 2000; Norris, 1999).

Citizens in Central and Eastern Europe have taken to the ballot box (ironically the political act that Mueller found least important for emerging democracies)–so much so that their turnout rates compare favorably with those of Western democracies.[1] Yet, other forms of participation in the new democracies of Central and Eastern Europe remains low. People did not have the right to shape their political destiny under Communism; their dislike of the authoritarian governments of the past led them to withdraw from civic associations and active political participation after transition (Howard, 2002; Thomassen and van Deth, 1998, 147).

Romania, which had one of the most authoritarian regimes in the Communist world, is a long way away from a participatory culture, much less a "civic culture" in the broader sense of the term (Almond and Verba, 1963). Romanians have a modest turnout rate of 55 percent. Beyond voting, most Romanians stay out of civic life. Only a handful of Romanians belong to voluntary associations. Fewer than 10 percent belong to any voluntary association according to data from the 1999 European Values Survey for Romania; a more expansive definition of group membership doubles that figure, but even this share is rather small by comparison with other nations (Badescu,

Sum, and Uslaner, in press). Even fewer Romanians take a more active role in political life, working for a political organization (such as a party), contacting public officials, or protesting government policy.

What motivates the handful of Romanians who take an active role in political life? I consider a variety of political activities that ordinary citizens perform in a democratic society, some conventional and some more confrontational. Even though small numbers of Romanians (ranging from 1 to 11 percent) perform these activities, they fall reasonably neatly into conventional and protest dimensions. Are there similar or different motivations for each type of political participation?

Studies of conventional and protest behavior in the West generally begin with the "conventional wisdom"(what I shall call the *legitimacy model*) that activities such as working for political parties and contacting authorities reflect satisfaction with and support for the political system. Such "traditional" activities reinforce the existing order, so they should attract people who are satisfied with their political system. Protest activities, on the other hand, indicate an unhappiness with politics as usual, a belief that leaders are not responsive to public demands. They are aimed at shaking up the system, so that "attention must be paid," or in the extreme, at replacing the current order with a different one altogether. Recent research has challenged this view and offered an alternative view (the *strategic resources model*): The world of political participation is *not* divided between supporters and opponents of the existing order. Instead, different issues and different times demand alternative strategies. Activists do not choose *either* traditional and protest activities. They may (and generally do) select *both*. People who work for a party or join a voluntary organization also will join a demonstration or a strike. When

thousands of people protest, they are *not* challenging the legitimacy of their government. They are expressing their opinions.

Political activity of all sorts is the preserve of an educated elite, primed by post-material values (Inglehart, 1979, 1990). These ideals place greater emphasis on a world of peace and justice than on material goods. And many (most) protests are aimed at these causes. With the rise of postmaterialism especially in Western Europe, it is not surprising that young people (who are participating at high levels, especially in unconventional activities) both take to the streets and take to more traditional politics.

But what happens in a society that does not have a large highly educated elite, where ordinary people are not sufficiently well-off to be post-materialist–indeed, where it has only recently become acceptable to be a *materialist*? What happens in a society where the young are not the *avant guard* of activism toward a better world, but rather face the future with pessimism and withdrawal? What happens in a society where many people believe that the system is rigged against ordinary men and women and where leaders line their own pockets from the public purse? What happens in a society where the overwhelming majority of people withdraw from civic life altogether? What happens, then, in Romania?

What happens is that the conventional wisdom turns out to be largely correct for Romania. Conventional participation reflects support for the system and especially overall activism in both political and *nonpolitical* civic life. The Romanians who join civic groups also work for political parties, contact political leaders, and attend political meetings, among other "traditional" activities. People who protest believe that the political and economic systems are *not* responsive and that working in traditional political activities is *not* effective. They are *not* the young,

educated post-materialists who take to the streets in Brussels, Paris, Hamburg, and London.

They *are* young, but not necessarily educated. They belong to unions (which has organized most

of the large protests in Romania) more than to civic groups. You are far less likely to see them at

a bowling alley than conventional activists. *And they are largely not the same people who take*

part in conventional politics.

I turn first to a summary of the perspectives on conventional and unconventional

participation, then to a brief examination of political and social life in Romania, a description of

the data I shall examine, and then to the data analysis itself.

Who Helps to Govern and Who Protests the Governors?

Almost all we know about political participation, both conventional and unconventional,

comes from studies of the West. This is hardly surprising. Participation is limited in authoritarian

settings. Voting and "working for a party" are unlikely to be attractive activities in one-party

states, while protesting may be dangerous. Outside the West, there may be ample room for

participation, but data may be scarce–and academic work on participation has been less plentiful.

Even so, most of what we know about participation focuses on voting behavior.

Conventional political participation is largely driven by: (1) demographics; (2) resources;

(3) efficacy and interest; and (4) social connections (Almond and Verba, 1963, ch. 11; Rosenstone

and Hansen, 2003, ch. 4; Teixeira, 1992; Uslaner, 2003; Verba, Schlozman, and Brady, 1995).

Wealthier, more highly educated people, and older people, are more likely to vote and to

participate in more demanding forms of participation (contacting officials, working for political

organizations, attending meetings). Citizens who have particular skills–speaking, writing, and

organizing–are also more active in political life (Verba, Schlozman, and Brady, 1995, 40, 352,

519). Interest and efficacy are key determinants of activism: If you believe that you can make a difference and that government officials are listening, you will be more likely to participate in political life (Teixeira, 1992, 200; Rosenstone and Hansen, 2003, 79); and, of course, people who are more interested in politics will take a more active role. Social connections also lead to greater civic engagement: People who have larger social networks (including religious ties) are more likely to participate in political life (Almond and Verba, 1963, 310; Knack, 1992; Lane, 1959, 164; Rosenstone and Hansen, 2003, 163-168). Beyond social ties, *prosocial attitudes* such as trust in other people are often presumed to lead to greater civic engagement (Bahry and Silver, 1990; Letki, 2003; Putnam, 2000, 137; Stolle, 1998). Lane (1959, 163) argues: "...those who are inclined to participate have...a faith in their fellow men."

The roots of unconventional participation are less well understood–partly because they have been studied less and partly because there is more disagreement over what leads people to take a more confrontational attitude toward their governments. The "conventional wisdom" (*legitimacy)* explanation is that people protest because they have lost confidence in their governments' performance and responsiveness (Bean, 1991, 273; Gurr, 1970; McAdam, McCarthy, and Zald, 1996). Bahry and Silver (1990, 828) argue for such a distinction between the motivations for conventional and unconventional behavior under the *pre-transition* Soviet state in 1989:

> ...people who concur with fundamental values of the Soviet regime...should be more involved in compliant political and social activity, since they would have more of a normative stake in the system; while those who oppose these traditional regime norms should be more disposed toward unconventional activity.

People resort to protest because they do not believe that authorities are responsive to them–more confrontational tactics are a cry that "attention must be paid!"

The legitimacy argument sees protesters as people who are on the fringes of political life–they are likely to be radicals on the right or the left and have little interest in traditional political or civic activities. "Voting only encourages them," they would say; and, as Chairman Mao Tse-Tung of the People's Republic of China, said, "A revolution is not a dinner party." To disarm the state and make it pay attention, you can't spend your time at dinner parties, bowling alleys, or political party meetings.

The *strategic resources* model disputes the argument that protesters have lost faith in the political system. Instead, it sees protest as one more form of participation that naturally grows out of a more generalized engagement in political life. Norris, Walgrave, and Van Aelst (2002, 5) argue:

> Strategic resource theory regards demonstrators as conventional participants using
> this action as one mode of political expression and communication just like any
> other.

They elaborate (7-8, emphasis in the original):

> ...we would *expect to find greater similarities than differences between the*
> *motivational attitudes of demonstrators, party members, and civic joiners*,
> including levels of political interest, internal efficacy (the belief that people can
> effect politics and the policymaking process), and external efficacy....if
> demonstrations supplement rather than replace other modes of activism...
> *demonstrators should also be active in traditional forms of political participation*,

as members of civic associations and political parties....if demonstrations have

become mainstream politics, we would expect demonstrators to be not on the far

left or right side....demonstrators will not show extremist political preferences and

will *display similar political preferences within the ideological spectrum*

compared with civic joiners and party members. Lastly, the characteristics of

education, socioeconomic status, and age usually help predict party membership

and associational activism. If the protest population has normalized then these

characteristics should also help identify demonstrators as well.

Protest is thus another tactic that citizens use to get what they want.

There is much to be said on behalf of strategic resource theory, mostly the evidence

supporting it. Norris, Walgrave, and Van Aelst (2002) report on surveys of the mass public,

demonstrators, and party activists in Belgium and find that demonstrators are *not* wild-eyed

radicals who have little use for the government or for ordinary politics. Instead, they join both

political and civic organizations. A revolution may not be a dinner party, but a protest might be.

Others have also found that protesters are not distinctive. They do not distrust

government and take part in conventional political life too (Barnes, Farah, and Heunks, 1979,

438; Bean, 1991, 272; Dalton, 2002, 67; Finkel, Muller, and Opp, 1989, 900; Marsh and Kaase,

1979). But protesters *do* differ in two critical ways from people who participate more in

conventional politics: They are younger (Bean, 1991, 266; Dalton, 2002, 69; Marsh and Kaase,

1979, 131; Norris, Walgrave, and Van Aelst, 2002, 18) and they are more likely to espouse post-

materialist values. These values emphasize giving people more say over their lives and protecting

freedom of speech above maintaining order in society and keeping prices low. Post-materialists

would likely be drawn to efforts to right the wrongs of society–and there is substantial evidence

that they are more frequent protesters (Bean, 1991, 266; Klingemann, 1979, 286; Inglehart, 1990,

312; Opp, 1990; 229-30). Protesters are not political geeks nor bowling addicts. They resemble

most the "boys and girls next door," the upbeat young person in university or already with a

degree (Norris, Walgrave, and Van Aelst, 2002, 18; cf. Dalton, 2002, 67):

> Demonstrators are not anti-state radicals who belong to socially marginal groups
>
> or who despise conventional forms of political participation. By contrast, they are
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> more similar to the Belgian population as a whole than civic joiners and party
>
> members.

So say a wrath of studies, almost all of which have been conducted in Western Europe and

Australia–the most postmaterialist countries in the world (Inglehart, 1990).

Where Postmaterialism Fails

What happens in countries with low levels of postmaterialism, such as Romania?[2] There is

little reason to expect Romanians (or other citizens of transition countries) to be post-materialist.

They are still emerging toward a market economy and remain a relatively poor country. Their per

capita income in 2000 was slightly higher than that of Peru and just 18 percent of that of Australia

(and 14 percent of the United States).[3] Nor does Romania have the highly educated elite that

fosters both protest and postmaterialism: Romania ranks in the middle of countries in enrollment

in both secondary schools and universities, while societies ranking high on post-materialism have

among the highest levels of education.[4]

The transition to Communism is a time for materialism rather than post-materialism and

there is much for citizens of these countries to protest. The years since the transitions began in

1989 have been a great period of disappointment for many in the transition countries, and especially in Romania. Every transition country for which there are data on changes in economic inequality save one (Slovakia) showed an increase in economic inequality from 1989 to the mid-1990s (Rosser, Rosser, and Ahmed, 2000). And all but one (Hungary) of the 17 countries for which there are data had a sharp increase (from .3 to 42 percent) in the size of the shadow economy (Schneider, 2003). When people do succeed, many in transition countries, most people believe that they prospered illegitimately: 80 percent of Bulgarians, Hungarians, and Russians say that high incomes reflect dishonesty (Kluegel and Mason, 2000, 167).

There is a lot to protest in these countries and it would seem surprising if there were not support for the legitimacy model: Conventional political activity reflects support for the political system, protest reflects strong dissatisfaction. Protest is not just an extension of conventional political activity. Indeed, there is evidence for this argument. Bahry and Silver (1990, 833, 835) report in their study of pre-transition Russia:

> ...people who were less satisfied with their material quality of life, very interested in politics, less supportive of state control of the economy, or had high faith in people were more likely to engage in unconventional activity....Compliant political activism (involvement in commissions at work, for the party, or for soviets and involvement in trade unions or other public organizations) was indeed related to...a stronger sense of personal influence, greater interest in politics, greater faith in people, and support for state control over civil liberties.

Thomassen and van Deth (1998, 153) also find that citizens in transition countries who protest have "a negative attitude toward government and its leaders."

Romania is an excellent case to put the legitimacy thesis to a test and to compare the roots of conventional and unconventional activity. Romania is one of the poorest among the formerly Communist countries. Its regime, under Nicolae Ceausescu, maintained a very strong grip on the public. When the Communist government fell in 1989, the Romanian public was initially very optimistic about the future. However, more than a decade later, parliamentary regimes of both the (old) left, the (new) right, and the quickly defunct reformist center have failed to gain the public's support. The economy faces severe difficulties, inequality is growing, trust and tolerance are especially low among the young, and corruption still is a continuing problem: Romania ranked 69th of 91 countries ranked in 2001 by Transparency International, a transnational organization established to fight corruption. Of 21 transition countries for which we have data on generalized trust from the World Values Survey, only Moldova ranks lower than Romania (although our own survey places Romania considerably higher).   Romania ranks last of 11 countries on trust in the legislative branch.[5]   An October, 2003 survey found that 91 percent of Romanians believe that inequality has increased since 1996, and only 2 percent say that it has decreased.[6]   Romanian politics, like that of many other transition countries, has been marked by sharp cleavages, though not always on the familiar left-right scale that divide most Western electorates.[7] Election campaigns have been bitter and have focused on economic failures and on ethnic divisions in the country.   Both sets of grievances readily lead to a withdrawal of legitimacy from the regime and a greater willingness to protest.

I investigate conventional and unconventional political participation in Romania through a survey conducted in 2001 conducted as part of the cross-national Citizenship, Involvement, Democracy program.[8] This survey asks about a range of political and social involvements; the

Romanian survey also asked about optimism. So it is well suited to a comparison of conventional and unconventional participation.

Participating (Almost) Alone: They Created a Democracy and Nobody Came

When government has been so brutal and unresponsive for so long, people lose faith in their capacity to affect change. Romanians duly go to the polls, but they do little else. In Table 1, I present the figures for conventional and unconventional participation measures in Romania. Few people participate at all. The most common activity is contacting a civil servant (11 percent), but it is unclear that this is a specifically political act: In many cases people *must* have contact with officials to qualify for government subsidies. Similarly, signing a petition (6 percent) may well mean writing a letter of complaint to the telephone company or gas company, which many might also consider to be contacting an official.[9] Beyond these activities, 6 percent say that they have attended a demonstration, five percent have gone on strike or worked for a political organization, and every other measure got four percent or less of the respondents.

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Table 1 about here

Especially since there are so few people taking part in each activity, it makes sense to form conventional and protest scales. I performed a factor analysis (with Varimax rotation) for the 14 measures of political activity. Initially, it seems that there might be a single participation factor, since only one factor has an eigenvalue of over 1.0. However, the second factor approaches an eigenvalue of 1.0 (.909) and the structure of a two-factor solution makes more sense. There are clearly two dimensions–one for conventional participation and another for protest behavior. On the first dimension are contacting politicians, other organizations, and civil servants; working for a

political party, a political action group, or another political organization; wearing a party or candidate badge; and attending a political meeting. The protest dimension includes signing a petition (which also loads moderately on the conventional participation factor), attending a demonstration, going on strike, boycotting products, buying goods for political causes, and taking part in illegal protests. The consumer measures have the lowest loadings on the protest factor, but their minuscule correlations with the conventional politics factor led me to retain them.

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Table 2 about here

As in Western Europe, Australia, and transition countries (Bahry and Silver, 1990, 832), there *is* evidence that people who participate in conventional political activity are more likely to engage in protest. In Table 3, I present data on levels of participation in each of the 14 activities. The first column presents the proportion of people taking part in any activity who had one or more acts of *conventional political participation*. The second column presents the proportion of people taking part in any activity who had one or more acts of *protest participation*. The third column includes the proportion of respondents who performed each of the conventional activities *but no protest activities* (in bold) and the share of people who took part in each of the protest acts *but performed no conventional acts* (in italics). These are the "minimally active" citizens. These three columns permit us to contrast levels of participation by: (1) conventional politics "specialists" (column one); (2) protest politics "specialists" (column two); and (3) people who engage in *only* one form of participation. The fourth column gives the ratio of participation by the two types of specialists–it tells us, e.g., that conventional participation specialists contact politicians 1.72 as much as people who perform *at least one* protest activity. The fifth column

compares specialists to the minimally active: conventional specialists contact politicians 9.13 times as much as people who perform *no protest activity*.

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Table 3 about here

The picture that emerges from Table 3 is that one form of participation does not "crowd out" another: People who participate in conventional political activities do not *shun* protest politics (and vice versa). Yet, Romanians *do* specialize. While 33 percent of protest politics specialists (people who perform at least one unconventional act) contact civil servants, 62 percent of conventional specialists (people who perform at least one conventional political act) do so. *Overall, conventional specialists perform between 1.32 (working for party) and 1.94 (contacting other organization) times more likely to engage in "traditional" activities as are protest specialists. But protest specialists are even more distinctive: They are between two (signing a petition) to three times (taking part in a strike and boycotting products) as likely to engage in confrontational activities as conventional specialists.*

There is a division of political labor in Romania, though it is not hard and fast. Both conventional and protest specialists contact politicians, organizations, and civil servants far more than minimal participants. If you engage in no acts of protest, you are highly unlikely to contact politicians or to work for organizations, attend political meetings, or wear a badge. But the gap is much bigger for unconventional activities. Unconventional specialists are *twice as likely to sign a petition*, presumably only a modestly confrontational activity, than conventional specialists. People who take part in no conventional activities were 18 times less likely than protest specialists to be part of an illegal protest and 16 percent less likely to sign a petition.

Romanian citizens fall into four categories of political participation (excluding voting). The great majority (75.6 percent) are inactive. Only 6.5 percent take part in both conventional and unconventional activities, while 7.2 percent *only* protest and 10.8 percent *only* engage in traditional political action. More than half (52.7 percent) of people who protest take no part in conventional political action, while 62 percent of conventional activists do not protest.

If the realms of conventional and unconventional action largely do not overlap, then there ought to be different motivations underlying each form of activity. To test this claim, the legitimacy thesis against its rival, the strategic resources model, I estimate identical models for the factor scores for each type of participation. The models include:

* measures of social connections: generalized trust; active participation in civic organizations (the sum over 27 organizations included in the CID survey, including civic associations, women's groups, religious organizations, professional/business/farm associations, etc., but excluding unions); and membership in political organizations (including environmental groups); union membership. Participation and memberships should have much more powerful (positive) effects on conventional participation, while union membership should have greater effects on protests (which include strikes). Bahry and Silver (1990) and Letki (2003) report positive impacts of generalized trust for both forms of participation.[10] Bahry and Silver (1990, 827) argue: "Faith in people should...be positively related to involvement in *unconventional* activity, since an ability to trust others reduces the perceived costs of being unconventional....But there should be no correlation between faith in people and citizen-initiated contacts with officials, since this activity does not require cooperation among citizens." Letki (2003) relies upon the argument of

Putnam to link social trust and civic engagement–that they are both parts of the same underlying notion of social capital. Elsewhere, I argue (Uslaner, 2002, 193): "Trust and political participation are in constant tension....political life is necessarily confrontational. People will be more likely to get involved in political life when they get mad and believe that some others, be they other people or political leaders, can't be trusted." Trends in trust in the United States are unrelated to patterns of conventional political participation, *except for protest, where declining trust leads to higher levels of protest.*

* personal efficacy and interest: the belief that one can affect politics (political efficacy), the belief that working for a political party is effective; frequency of watching television news; frequency of discussing politics with others. Each of these measures, save the efficacy of working for a political party, should increase both forms of political participation. Support for the party system should increase conventional participation and, if the legitimacy model is correct, *decrease* protest participation. The strategic resources model would expect a positive relationship between the efficacy of working for a party and protesting.

* support for the political system and general optimism: trust in parliament; the belief that courts treat all people equally; the belief that you can get ahead by hard work rather than luck or connections. The strategic resources thesis would expect these variables to be insignificant for protest, though perhaps positive for conventional activism. The legitimacy model would expect *positive* effects for conventional actions, *negative* coefficients for unconventional behavior.

* world view and political values: centrist ideology and tolerance of meetings of extremists,

which is as close as the CID survey gets to postmaterialism. Centrist views should be

negatively related to both forms of participation: Moderates don't become motivated to

get involved in political life and the legitimacy model would expect people on either

extreme to be more likely to protest. Tolerance of extremists should be positively related

to protest behavior.

* demographics: education and age. More highly educated people should participate in both

    forms of political behavior. Older people should engage more in conventional

    participation, younger people more in protest participation.

Since the two models are not independent, I estimated the regressions using Zellner's (1962)

seemingly unrelated equation technique.[11]

Who Participates in Politics?

I present the regression models in Table 4. Overall, there is considerably more support for

the legitimacy model than the strategic resources thesis.

The strongest support for the legitimacy model is in the results for support for the system

and general optimism: Conventional participants have greater faith in the system: They trust

parliament and are more likely to believe that the courts treat all equally. *Protest participants*

have less faith in the system: The belief that the courts treat some people better than others is the

strongest motivating force behind protest. People who believe that you need connections or luck

to get ahead are also more likely to protest (though the coefficient is only significant at p < .10).

The efficacy of working for a party is surprisingly insignificant for conventional participation, but

Romanians who express their faith in working for political parties are *less* likely to engage in

unconventional politics. Consistent with Uslaner (2002), generalized trust is not significantly

connected to any form of political action (but see below).

Both protesters and more conventional participants are active in civic organizations. *However, the size of the coefficient on participation in civic associations is five times larger for conventional than for unconventional participation.* Membership in political organizations is a powerful predictor of conventional participation–hardly surprising–*but it is insignificant in the model for protest participation* (and the coefficient for conventional participation is six times larger than that for the protest factor). You are far more likely to run into a conventional participant than a protester in a bowling league.

The evidence on ideology and values is more mixed: Centrists are *less* likely to engage in conventional politics, but ideology is not a significant predictor of protest. Protesters are not political extremists–they are people with grudges against the system that has created greater inequalities and unfairness. They *are* intolerant of extremists, perhaps believing that ordinary citizens are the ones with real grievances against the injustices of the market economy.

Who are the people with such grievances? They are the young, who across a wide range of measures of trust, tolerance, optimism for the future, political support, and civic engagement are more negative than their elders. They are also union members, who are significantly more likely to protest than non-members–but marginally *less* active in conventional politics.

Protesters are not simply young people and union members who have gripes with the system. They are also people who believe in their own political power. Efficacy leads people to protest, not to get involved in more traditional activities. Protesters watch a lot of television news (conventional participants don't stand out here) and they are much more likely to discuss politics with others. Conventional participants also talk politics, but not nearly as much (the regression

coefficient is half as large as for protesting).   So protesters are (in the words of the news anchor in the movie "Network") "mad as hell and not going to take it anymore." They demand that "attention must be paid" and they believe that they can force the government to heed their demands by confrontation. Conventional politics is not so attractive since protesters believe that the system is stacked against them. They are less likely to join traditional civic associations because: (1) they have no faith in them (Howard, 2002); and (2) the struggle to get by in daily life leaves them little extra time for leisure.

I also estimated models for 13 of the 14 acts using Gary King's rare events logit (relogit) procedure.   This technique corrects the standard logit estimates for binary dependent variables where the overwhelming number of cases are zero.[12] Overall, the results largely confirm the regressions, but refine some conclusions above: Perceptions of inequality seem less critical for most protest activities taken individually, but remain significant for attending demonstrations and going on strike. Efficacy and political discussion are most critical for strikes; political discussion is most critical for working for a party, attending a political meeting, signing petitions, and attending demonstrations. And generalized trust *is* negatively related to going to demonstrations, boycotting products, and especially striking and wearing a political badge. The confrontational nature of politics is borne out in these effects of trust.

Reprise

Conventional and protest politics have different roots. Much of it may stem from differences across countries. But there may also be another, less obvious, factor: I included two questions on justice (courts treat all equally and some people get ahead by connections or luck rather than hard work), which are not often found in other studies. It may well be that the effects

of both measures of justice on protest behavior are not confined to Romania or even to transition countries more generally.

Why do Romanians protest? They use unconventional tactics because they believe that the system is unfair and that conventional politics is not responsive to their demands, not because they are postmaterialists. But most Romanians *don't protest* and few take any active role in politics. Romania is a country where only 30 percent of people trust parliament (and a similar share trust each other or different ethnic groups), where only 3 percent *strongly trust the government but 18 percent strongly distrust it*, where as many people believe that life for the next generation will be worse as will get better, where only 17 percent believe that the courts treat everyone equally, and only four percent belong to any political organization and only 15 percent take an active role in *any* organization.

Trust, tolerance, confidence in the system, optimism, and civic engagement are low–the residual effects of both poverty and an oppressive Communist government. It must certainly take a large dose of optimism to get involved in conventional politics and it is easy to understand why those who have been disappointed by the transition engage in protest. The significant negative effects of generalized trust on strikes and demonstrations, two of the most confrontational forms of protest, suggest that unconventional political behavior in Romania reflects strains in the country's social fabric. It is also easy to understand why conventional and unconventional politics mostly do not overlap–and why there are different motivations for each. A similar dynamic is likely to work in other transition countries–and indeed in other nations that have had nonresponsive governments and high degrees of poverty and inequality.

TABLE 1

Participation Levels in Romania

Activity	Proportion Taking Part	Number Taking Part
Contact politicians	.04	46
Contact other organization	.04	49
Contact civil servant	.11	131
Work for political party	.02	25
Work for political action group	.01	18
Work for other political organization	.05	59
Attend political meeting	.04	44
Wear campaign badge	.02	26
Signed a petition	.06	68
Boycotted certain products	.02	25
Buy goods for political reason	.03	37
Take part in demonstration	.06	70
Take part in strike	.05	63
Take part in illegal protest	.01	12

N = 1217

Proportion performing no activity: .756
Proportion performing one activity: .118

TABLE 2

Dimensions of Political Participation in Romania

Variable	Conventional Participation	Protest Participation
Contact politicians	**.573**	.159
Contact other organization	**.546**	.140
Contact civil servant	**.447**	.247
Work for political party	**.707**	.132
Work for political action group	**.667**	-.009
Work for other political organization	**.459**	.170
Attend political meeting	**.564**	.167
Wear campaign badge	**.563**	.046
Signed a petition	.293	**.471**
Boycotted certain products	.060	**.307**
Buy goods for political reason	.113	**.351**
Take part in demonstration	.163	**.541**
Take part in strike	.042	**.531**
Take part in illegal protest	.139	**.419**
Eigenvalue	**3.230**	**.909**

Correlation between factors: .146

Bold figures represent variables loading on each factor.

TABLE 3

Participation Levels by Arena of Action

Activity	By any act of Political Participation	By any act of Protest Participation	By no acts of one form of participation	Participation Ratio by Arena	Overall Participation Ratio
Contact politicians	.219	.127	**.024**	1.72	9.13
Contact other organization	.233	.120	**.028**	1.94	8.32
Contact civil servant	.623	.325	**.073**	1.92	8.53
Work for political party	.119	.090	**.010**	1.32	11.90
Work for political action group	.086	.054	**.009**	1.59	9.56
Work for other political organization	.281	.150	**.032**	1.87	8.78
Attend political meeting	.124	.078	**.012**	1.59	10.33
Wear campaign badge	.210	.133	**.021**	1.58	10.00
Signed a petition	.205	.410	*.025*	.50	16.40
Boycotted certain products	.052	.151	*.014*	.34	10.79
Buy goods for political reason	.090	.223	*.018*	.40	12.39
Take part in demonstration	.171	.422	*.034*	.41	12.41
Take part in strike	.114	.380	*.038*	.30	10.00
Take part in illegal protest	.038	.072	*.004*	.53	18.00

Entries in the first column are the proportions of people who perform *any* conventional political activity who engaged in each specific activity. Entries in the second column are the proportions of people who perform *any* unconventional (protest) political activity who engaged in each specific activity.

Bold entries in the third column are the proportions of people who perform *no* unconventional (protest) political activity who engaged in each specific conventional activity. *Italicized* entries in the third column are the proportions of people who perform *no* conventional political activity who engaged in each specific activity. E.g., 2.4 percent (.024) of people who do *not* engage in any protest activity contact politicians and 2.5 percent (.025) of people who do *not* engage in any conventional activity sign a petition.

Entries in the fourth column are the ratios of column 1 to column 2: People who engage in *any* conventional political activity are 1.72 more likely to contact politicians than people who engage in *any* level of unconventional (protest) activity. Entries in the fifth column are the ratios of the highest levels of participation in each activity (either column 1 or 2) to the lowest (column 3): E.g., people who engage in *any* form of conventional participation are 9.13 times more likely to contact politicians than people who engage in *no* protest activities.

TABLE 4

Seemingly Unrelated Regressions of Conventional and Protest Participation in Romania

Variable	Conventional Participation			Protest Participation		
	Coefficient	Std. Error	t ratio	Coefficient	Std. Error	t ratio
Generalized trust	-.095	.087	-1.10	-.087	.084	-1.04
Trust in parliament	.023*	.014	1.61	.007	.014	.51
Discuss politics with others	.065*	.041	1.59	.110***	.040	2.79
Frequency TV/radio news	.003	.040	.09	.081**	.038	2.12
Political efficacy	.003	.014	.18	.021*	.013	1.53
Working for party is effective	.012	.015	.90	-.020*	.014	-1.54
Participate in civic organizations	.579****	.059	9.74	.118**	.057	2.06
Member political organizations	.975****	.140	6.98	.160	.134	1.19
Centrist political ideology	-.053**	.024	-2.25	-.011	.023	-.47
Tolerate meetings of extremists	-.002	.045	-.06	-.101***	.043	-2.33
Courts treat all equally	.192**	.111	1.74	-.325***	.106	-3.05
Get ahead by hard work	.068	.056	1.20	-.069*	.054	1.27
Age	.003	.003	1.21	-.006***	.002	-2.64
Education	.019**	.012	1.69	.006	.011	.55
Union member	-.219	.141	-1.56	.396***	.135	2.92
R^2			.348			.872
Root Mean Square Error			.141			.839

N = 511

**** $p < .0001$ *** $p < .01$ ** $p < .05$ * $p < .10$

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NOTES

*   I am grateful to the Starr Foundation, through the Institutional Research and Exchanges

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below). Uslaner is also grateful to the General Research Board of the Graduate School of

the University of Maryland—College Park. I am particularly grateful to Gabriel Badescu

and Paul Sum for their perceptive commentaries and for teaching me about Romania and

to Mark Lichbach for helpful comments.

1.   Turnout in formerly Communist nations is actually slightly higher on average (68.6

percent) than in Western countries (67.8 percent) or outside either bloc (62.2 percent)

using the turnout figures averaged from 1945 to 1998 (for years of democratic

governance) at: http://www.idea.int/vt/survey/voter_turnout_pop1.cfm .

2.   The mean score for post-materialism in the latest wave of the World Values survey for

Romania is 1.62, compared to 2.72 for the *most* postmaterialist country, Australia.

Romania ranks 55th of 71 countries and regions in the World Values Survey.   The share of

postmaterialists in Romania is 7.5 percent, one-fifth as many as in Australia and less than

half as many as in Belgium. Australia is the least materialist country (with just 8 percent

of respondents), while Romania is in the top 15, together with 10 other transition

countries).

3.   These figures are derived from the Penn World Tables, using the income figures adjusted

for the United States = 100.

4.   These data come from the State Failure Project at http:www.cidcm.umd.edu/inscr/stfail/;

the secondary school data are from the 1990s, the university data from 1985 (prior to the

fall of the Communist government).

5. The data on trust and confidence in the legislative branch come from the World Values Surveys (1995) and the data on corruption from the 2001 Transparency International estimates. For the unofficial economy, the data come from a cross-national data set of Florencio Lopez-de-Silanes of Yale University at http://iicg.som.yale.edu/data/datasets.shtml; and the data on inequality from Rosser, Rosser, and Ahmed (2000).

6. These data come from a survey conducted by the Center for Urban Sociology (CURS) in October 2003, as part of the Public Opinion Barometer program, sponsored by the Soros Foundation for an Open Society - Romania. Information about this program and data sets can be found (in Romanian) at http://www.osf.ro/ro/bop/cercetare.html. I am grateful to my collaborator Gabriel Badescu for sharing these data.

7. The tau-c correlation between identification with the former Communist party (PSD) and left-right ideology is .244: While 85 percent of those on the far left identify with the PSD, so do 60 percent of people on the far right.

8. The 2001 survey is part of a larger project funded by the Starr Foundation through the International Research and Exchanges Board (IREX) Caspian and Black Sea Collaborative Program (2001). My fellow investigators are Paul Sum of the University of North Dakota; and Gabriel Badescu, Mihai Pisica, and Cosmin Marian, all of Babes-Bolyai University, Cluj-Napoca, Romania. We used the Citizenship Involvement Democracy (CID) common core questionnaire. See the CID web page at http://www.mzes.uni-mannheim.de/ projekte/cid/ . See a description of our research project at

http://www.irex.org/programs/black-caspian-sea/grantees01-02.htm.

9. Eleven percent of people say that they contacted a public official, but 52 percent who signed a petition also said that they had contact with a civil servant (phi = .342, Yule's Q = .820), providing further evidence that both signing a petition and especially contacting a civil servant may not be overtly political. I owe these results and interpretations to my collaborator Gabriel Badescu.

10. Trust is measured by the standard survey question: "Generally speaking, do you believe that most people can be trusted, or can't you be too careful in dealing with people?" See Uslaner (2002, ch. 3) for a defense of this question and an interpretation.

11. Since the models are identical, the coefficients will be identical to those of ordinary least squares (OLS). However, the standard errors will be incorrectly estimated using OLS.

12. The Stata program and papers explaining the technique can be found at http://gking.harvard.edu/stats.shtml. No estimation could be obtained for illegal protests because the estimation matrix had missing elements.