

SOCIAL ACTORS IN A POLITICAL GAME. THE ROMANIAN POLITICAL ELITE AND DEMOCRATIZATION, 1989-2000.

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Abstract

There are many factors accounting for the success and form of the transition to democracy. The present study examines the role of the political elite in the process of democratization and democratic consolidation for the case of Romania (1989-2000). It focuses on the structure and social composition of the Romanian political elite, pointing to its disunity and lack of integration and explaining how they have affected its political performance. For the purposes of this research, the elite was operationalized as comprising the members of the successive Parliaments. The case of Hungary is considered as a basis for comparison for the first post-communist legislature in order to understand the qualitative difference in relatively similar findings of elite fragmentation and communist elite reproduction. The smoother political transition to democracy involving actual political plurality and the practice of negotiation, the clear link between the political parties and the social groups and interests within the society they represented, and the more institutionalized political space made Hungary a more effective democracy, at least in terms of parliamentary activity.

Keywords: democratization, elites, elite cleavages, political parties, voting behavior

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At the fall of communism in Eastern Europe in 1989, the West presented several successful political models of democracy to the states of the former communist block. Moreover, the choice of political and economic institutions was guided through certain political and economic mechanisms of incentive, regulation and constraint, in the form of supra-statal or international organizations and associated legislation.

However the import of institutions and the efforts to accommodate to Western democratic ways did not immediately produce functional democracies or the perspective that such goal will be achieved. Many path dependency approach studies have demonstrated the influence and importance of previous regime structures in the transition.¹ The reconstitution and formation of the elites that would lead the political and economic transformations has been one of the most important post-communist processes profoundly marked by the four decades of communism.

The present study examines the role of the political elite in the process of democratization and democratic consolidation, for the case of Romania, covering the period between December 1989 and December 2000. It focuses on the structure and social composition of the Romanian political elite, pointing to its disunity and lack of integration and explaining how they have affected its political performance. The case of Hungary is considered as a basis for comparison in order to understand the qualitative difference in relatively similar findings of elite fragmentation and communist elite reproduction.

The empirical analysis employs an operational definition of the political elite, comprising the members of the elected Parliament. As such, it is limited to attribute data analysis, and ignores network data, which, as it is suggested in the conclusion, would give a more comprehensive and complete understanding of the part played by the political elite in the institutionalization of democracy in Romania.

One caveat must apply for the whole study. While the role played by the political elite in the process of democratization is of significant importance, the present study focuses only on certain of its aspects. Moreover, the interpretation given to the empirical data is tentative, since other important factors that influence the democratic transition and consolidation of democracy and interact with the factor elite integration (such as the economic factor, the influence of international political and economic organizations, the form and level of organization of the civil society etc.) are omitted in this analysis.

¹ See for example David Stark, "Path Dependence and Privatization Strategies in East Central Europe", *East European Politics and Societies*, 6:1 (1992): 17-54.

Issues of democratic transition and consolidation.

The fall of the communist regimes in Eastern Europe was a direct result of the loss of legitimacy of the leaderships, along with the ideological and economic bankruptcy of the various forms of communism (in the context of Gorbachev's economic reforms and transparency doctrine replacing the former Brezhnev interventionist doctrine). In their efforts to re-set the grounds of the states, the new political elites tried to dissociate themselves from the former leadership, ideology and political structures, while struggling to preserve enough elements of legal continuity of their states (and of themselves). The major strategy to do the former was to look for scapegoats, appealing to a rhetoric that radicalized a favorable national understanding of the communist take-over: communism was the result of foreign invasions and was imposed on the respective nation; the local communists were recruited massively from the national minorities (e.g. the case of Jews and Hungarians in Romania, alongside the foreign Russians). The nation was thus victimized and absolved of any responsibility or guilt. The internal elements of legitimization appealed to a past time of independence and perceived prosperity of the country, for many of them the period between the wars, or an earlier "Golden Era" in the popular history and historiography of the nation. Efforts were made to establish continuity between the ethos and practices of that period and the present, often materialized in nationalizing policies (such as citizenship, linguistic or minority policies). The processes of constitution writing set the legal and symbolic grounds of the democratizing and the newly independent states. It defined the organization and character of the state, in most cases explicitly and adamantly unitary, indivisible, independent and sovereign.

The Cold War however was less one of principles of state legitimacy, either internal or international. It was carried on in order to legitimize certain political and economic ideologies. It allowed the expansion of the Soviet state at the price of several nationalities' statehood, as well as its domination by force over its external empire (best objectified on the Brezhnev doctrine). The end of the Cold War was brought about by the discontent with the Realpolitik (inviolability of states) and its consequences: abuses of populations by their governments, internal colonialism/imperialism. Border changes and concessions towards

³ "Party Nationalisation" has been calculated for Western Europe (Caramani 2004), North- and South America (Jones&Mainwaring 2003), India (Chhibber&Kollman 1998), Thailand and the Philippines (Kasuya 2001; Hicken forthcoming).

greater autonomy to domestic ethnic groups came to be seen acceptable, normal, and even desirable. The changed security environment accounts as much for this, as the loss of the (perceived) legitimacy of the respective states (to their populations, and to the international community).

The international context in which the states of Central and Eastern Europe have started the transition to democracy was one defined by two seemingly conflicting principles: an *ideological convergence where democratic ideas had no competitor and the acceptance of national sovereignty as the source of legitimacy for state authority*.

Procedurally² the democratization of a political system requires that free and competitive elections are organized and held. However, as Linz and Stepan highlight, transitions to democracy may begin that are never completed.³ A consolidated democracy is achieved in a political space where, behaviorally, no significant political, social or economic groups seriously attempt to overthrow the democratic regime or secede from the state; attitudinally, the overwhelming majority of the population believe that any further political change must obey democratic procedures and formulae, irrespective of the political and economic situation, and that these are the most appropriate to govern collective life in their society; constitutionally, all political actors become accustomed to resolving political conflict according to the established laws, procedures, and institutions, sanctioned by the new democratic process.⁴

For a modern political democracy to exist, “control over government decisions about policy is constitutionally vested in elected officials”.⁵ Institutionally, this means that there are no other bodies in the society enjoying formal political decision-making prerogatives (e.g. the military) or that unelected officials may act independently of or veto decisions made by the people’s representatives (e.g. civil servants, state managers)⁶ A transition is not complete until the democratically elected government is *de jure* and *de facto* sovereign.

2 In Schumpeter’s terminology, the democratic method is that institutional arrangement of political decision-making by which individuals obtain control of the government through open contestation. Joseph Alois Schumpeter, *Capitalism, Socialism and Democracy*, (London: Routledge, 1961).

3 The “electoralist fallacy” sees a necessary condition of democracy, free elections, as a sufficient condition. Juan Linz, Alfred Stepan, *Problems of Democratic Transition and Consolidation* (Baltimore & London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996), 4.

4 Linz & Stepan, *Problems of Democratic Transition*, 5-6.

5 Robert Dahl (1982), *Dilemmas of Pluralist Democracies* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1982), 11. See his list of the “procedural minimal” conditions for modern political democracies.

6 Philippe Schmitter, Terry Lynn Karl, “What Democracy is...and is not”, *Journal of Democracy* 2: 3 (1991): 75-88.

The process of institutional design and institution-building entailed by a democratic transition affects the chances of a previously non-democratic regime completing it and consolidating democracy. This refers to the structure of the legislating⁷ and governing bodies,⁸ to the electoral system,⁹ to the form of the state,¹⁰ to the constitution-making process.¹¹ The transition to democracy may be hindered by the lack of consensus at the level of the elite over the institutions for producing democratic government and for governing. As I have shown elsewhere, the first Romanian Parliament elected in May 1990, which had also acted as Constitutional Assembly, was characterized by disagreement over (at least) two of the fundamental institutions of the state: the form of the state and the type of government (finally enshrined in the Constitution as unitary and national, respectively republican).¹²

This brings us to one important factor affecting the processes of democratic transition and consolidation, and which concerns the attitudes, behavior and structure of the political elite. Acquiring and getting used to democratic practices is of crucial importance in making democratic institutions work. The progress of learning is painful, and may often fail.¹³ The social characteristics of the ruling elite may affect

7 In Romania, for example, the Parliament is constituted of two bodies – the Senate and the Chamber of Deputies – enjoying identical prerogatives. The bills need to be approved by both chambers, and in the case of disagreement there is a fairly complicated procedure of mediation. As a consequence, the whole legislative process is difficult, tedious, long and ineffective.

8 In the case of Poland, the compromise resulted of the Round Table talks opened to free competition only 35% of the seats in the Sejm. The party-soldiers proposed a strong office of Presidency, with an indirectly elected president, proposal refused by Solidarity. As a trade-off was created the Senate, to be freely elected, and a Presidency, with a president elected by simple majority by the Sejm and the Senate, with special powers in the areas of internal security, defense and foreign relations.

9 Plurality, majority or proportional representation, or some mixture of it, favoring particular outcomes. See Maurice Duverger, *Les Partis Politiques*, (Paris: Seuil, 1951); Douglas W. Rae, *The Political Consequences of Electoral Laws* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1971); Matthew S. Shugart, John M. Carey, *Presidents and Assemblies: Constitutional Design and Electoral Dynamics*, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1992); Rein Taagepera, Mathew S. Shugart, *Seats and Votes. The Effects and Determinants of Electoral Systems* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989).

10 Unitary or federal, national or multinational. See also citizenship policies and minority policies.

11 The timing of the constitution-making process is crucial in terms of legitimacy and distribution of power. See, for example, the complications entailed by the constitution-making process in Poland in Linz & Stepan, *Problems of Democratic Transition*, 280-283.

12 Irina Culic, *Câstigătorii. Elita politică și democratizare în România* (Cluj-Napoca: Limes, 1999), pp. 79-116.

13 Most new democracies in Eastern and Central Europe and former Soviet Union witnessed the intermittent victory of non-democratic practices, be they authoritarian, anti-politics, populist or other, at the level of individuals (see the cases of Ion Iliescu in Romania, Lech Walesa in Poland, or Alexander Lukashenka in Belarus), parties (see the Greater Romania Party), or entire systems (see the case of Moldova).

this process dramatically. A unified elite, in terms of commitment to democratic values and practices, respectively an integrated elite, in terms of social homogeneity and communication networks, may facilitate the consolidation of democracy.

Dimensions of elite integration

The classical theories of elites took for granted elite unity, best captured in Meisel's conceptualisation of "elite's three C's": consciousness (group awareness and cohesion), coherence (homogeneity in terms of class and social networks, socialising institutions, values, loyalties and interests), and conspiracy (common will and intentions, joint of action).¹⁴ The unity of the elite was given various explanations, having been seen as a product of the principles of organisation of the elite itself, as outcome of elite's social background, or as esprit de corps generated by the commonality of interests and the need to reproduce power.¹⁵

The pluralist approach disputes the monolithic quality of the elite, as it sees it composed of a set of groups representing various interests formulated within the society. Any decision-making at this level requires negotiation, accommodation and compromise among these groups. They exercise mutual control and there is no single sub-elite dominating decision-making in all issues of importance, even though they may control one particular sector.¹⁶

Irrespective of how we conceptualise the political elite, from the viewpoint of an analyst of democratisation of most importance is how the political field and the population become acquainted with the values and institutional practices of democracy. This is a difficult process, as multi-party politics was absent from the political scene for more than four decades, society is flattened in terms of interests, and the forms of anti-politics that brought the fall of the communist regimes are not conducive to democracy. The political elite plays a crucial part in this process and the literature on democratisation and post-communist politics is eloquent in this respect.

14 James H. Meisel, *The Myth of the Ruling Class: Gaetano Mosca and the Elite* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1958).

15 See Roberto Michels, *Political Parties* (Glencoe: Free Press, 1915); Charles Wright Mills, *The Power Elite* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1956); Gaetano Mosca, *The Ruling Class* (New York, Toronto, London: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1939), Vilfredo Pareto, *The Mind and Society. Treatise of General Sociology* (New York: Dover Publications, 1935).

16 See Robert Dahl, *Who Governs?* (New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 1961); Giovanni Sartori, *The Theory of Democracy Revisited*, Chatham, New Jersey: Chatham House, 1987).

The present study will focus on only one aspect of elite's influence in crafting democracy, that is, the structure of the elite and elite's social integration and their effect on the efficiency and stability of the political system. The case under study is the Romanian political elite, contrasted to the Hungarian political elite for the purpose of meaningful interpretations.

Accepting that a democratic system is characterised by an elite representing the interests articulated within the society, that a system of balance and control of the elite fractions is in place, and that they are responsible to the population, one essential element making this institutional arrangement work is the integration of the elite. This refers to (a) common socialisation patterns, in common institutions and value systems, which facilitate consensus over values and modes of political behaviour; (b) common recruitment model familiarising the members of the elite with the rules of the political game, possibly producing various affinities; (c) formal and informal networks of communication, friendship, influence, to make possible peaceful political decision-making and factional interest pursuit, within normative, procedural and institutional framework. These constitute the foundation of some solidarity, understood as mutual trust that would help the members of the elite subdue personal or factional advantages or disagreements if necessary in order to insure a stable government.

A non-integrated elite - lacking operative networks of communication and influence among factions, an elite scarce in structures of friendships, solidarity, trust and common values – generally enters into factional struggles of “war” politics, politics carried as a game where the winner takes all.¹⁷ This elite is more likely to determine an unstable regime. The lack of formal and informal networks of communication and negotiation prevents satisfactory access to political decision-making for the various factions of the elite. The existing regime thus comes to be viewed as a vehicle by which the dominant factions promote their own interests. A severely disintegrated elite may bring the political system to crisis, when the dominant faction attempts to weaken or even destroy the institutions and mechanisms of the regime, and the actors operating within its framework.¹⁸

17 According to Sartori's formulation, *Theory of Democracy Revisited*, 224-6.

18 See Michael Burton, Richard Gunther, John Higley, "Introduction: elite transformations and democratic regimes", in John Higley, Richard Gunther, eds., *Elites and Democratic Consolidation in Latin America and Southern Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 10-13, for a typology of elites according to their level of structural integration and value consensus.

The social homogeneity of the elite denotes the commonality of social origin, educational trajectory, and life-style - all of which supposedly provide the basis of social and psychological unity.¹⁹ Empirically, the upper class supplies members for the political elite in great numbers.²⁰ It usually associates with other social characteristics – apart from education, occupation and social status, attributes such as age, geographic-cultural area of origin or university affiliation, ethnicity, religion disproportionately contribute to the elite composition. This over-representation of certain social categories insures some degree of integration due to common socializing experiences, homogeneity of formal and informal acquired rules - an esprit de corps. Kinship represents a particular form of elite integration, irrespective of the social mechanisms, characteristics of political system and individual strategies that favor this tendency. Elite members' solidarity is enhanced by the educational institutions. Both the profile and content of education (specialized versus general, exact versus humanist and social sciences) and the cultivation of personal relationships and stable networks of cognition and recognition affect the level of integration of the elite.

On the other hand, social origin and status are not always good predictors of political behavior. Various adult socializations and many other factors influence this relationship. Thus social homogeneity is neither a necessary nor a sufficient condition of elite integration. Empirically nonetheless it more often than not works as an integrating factor.

Another means of elite integration are the models of political recruitment. The paths followed by an individual to access top political decision-making positions constitute a selection mechanism whose effect is the production of a predictable elite, in terms of government. Recruitment paths favor and cultivate certain patterns of behaviors, irrespective of the personal and social backgrounds of the individuals. The recruitment process is concurrently a socializing process. The competition for power positions leads to development of abilities required by the political game. The institutional trajectory of the leaders

19 See Robert Putnam, *The Comparative Study of Elites* (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice Hall, 1976), 108-9.

20 The case of the communist regimes, especially the Stalinist phase, is a separate question. One of the prerequisites of the access to power was a "healthy origin". In Romania, as elsewhere, this denoted sons and daughters of peasants or workers, as opposed to sons and daughters of wealthy peasants, landowners, capitalists, liberal professions, clerics - the former dominant class, respectively individuals possessing a "revolutionary" capital, acquired through shared clandestine communist experience, or displaying forms of loyalty to the communist ideology and practice.

(party, state bureaucracy, academia, business, international or transnational organizations) may also account for the way they will act when in government or in power positions.

The networks existing between the members of the political elite represent a crucial element for the structuring of the elite. The different configurations of the various relationships among the members of the elite account for the structure of positions and groups of power and influence, and for the interactions among them. The relationships established within the elite may reveal conflict of interests, goals and aims, or, on the contrary, shared interests, values and actions. Of particular importance is the coincidence of these multiple networks, since contradictory patterns of relations generate instability, fragmentation and inefficiency.

Consensus over the “rules of political behavior” constitutes a fundamental dimension of the act of government and directly affects the solidity of the system. It is a requirement for a competitive system and shapes the framework for debates and negotiations concerning altercations over substantial matters. Empirical data suggest that the members of the elite are generally more committed to the values of democracy and liberalism than the masses. This is accounted by their social and educational background, but at the same time it is the result of their socialization within the political field. *“Elite commitment to ‘the system’ is doubtless also related to the gratifications the system gives them. Leaders are more likely to agree on the rules of the game, because it is fundamentally their game. They are, in fact, quicker to endorse political liberty than political equality, and the system within which they urge dissidents to work is one in which most important decisions are taken at the top.”*²¹ Related to this, a high level of mutual trust is conducive to the integration of the elite and hence to the efficiency of its activity. As Putnam shows, the mark of a unified elite is not the absence of disagreement, but rather sufficient reciprocated trust, so that when necessary, the members of the elite will overcome immediate personal or partisan interests in order to provide a stable rule.²²

The social context and the way it is institutionalized affect in a significant degree the likelihood of elite integration. Ethnic, religious, linguistic, economic and other cleavages, respectively the various configurations of interests of social groups and categories, mould the party structure, and are even more sharply reflected at the level of the

21 Putnam, *Elites*, 116.

22 Putnam, *Elites*, 122.

elite. In the case of a heterogeneous society, marked by manifold social divisions, a strong commitment to the existing political institutions and rules of political behavior is a must. The efficiency of the government and the stability of the system are given by the elite's command and ability to design such institutions that conflicting interests are accommodated for the greatest benefit of the various social groups.²³

The *institutional* context and the interest structure of the numerous institutions in a society constitute another dimension of elite integration. In his analysis of the American power elite, Wright Mills deplored the unprecedented accumulation of power, due to the interchangeability of commanding roles at the top of the key institutions of the system - the government, the military and the economic corporations.²⁴ In most cases though, functional specialization determines symbolic struggles for the definition of the national values and priorities – objectified for example in the struggles for the budget share. The way issues of national importance are defined and contested produce divergent perspectives and loyalties.

One can reasonably assume that an integrated elite is of crucial importance for the countries that went through a democratic transition and aim to consolidate democracy. Most of the aspects related to elite-integration discussed above affect the constitution of an institutional framework that favors democratic attitudes and behaviors, respectively the stability of the system and the way democracy works. When I talk of institutional framework I mean both the set of democratic rules, norms and procedures, and the institutions as routinized practices of social actors. For the substance of democracy is given not by the formal accomplishment of the set of criteria by which political analysts and politicians describe a democratic system, but by the way that *system works*.

In the following I will analyze the Romanian political field in terms of elite integration. I will indicate how its fragmentation affected its political performance, using the case of Hungary as a comparative basis.

23 See for example the consociational formula adopted by Belgium to accommodate ethnic, linguistic and religious cleavages.

24 A phenomenon expressed in an aphorism of a General Motors president turned secretary of defense: "What is good for the United States is good for General Motors, and vice versa." Putnam, *Elites*, 122.

A non-integrated elite. The Romanian political elite 1990-1992 in comparative perspective with the Hungarian political elite 1990-1994.²⁵

I define the political elite in institutional and organisational terms, as persons who influence societal decision-making regularly and substantially, due to their positions in powerful organisations. Therefore included in the elite are individuals whose decisions affect the everyday life of important segments of the polity, and whose views and stances are likely to be taken into account by other influential political actors during the political process in such a way that the political outcome is significantly altered by their intervention.

The operationalization of the political elite for the empirical analysis was determined by both theoretical and practical purposes. In this study the Romanian political elite comprises the members of the Romanian Parliament (senators and deputies). Since the two chambers of the Romanian Parliament have equal powers, according to the 1991 Romanian Constitution,²⁶ both senators and deputies are included in the analysis.²⁷ The basic assumption of the methodology, known as positional analysis, is that the formal institutions of government provide a useful map of power relations. Membership in key political organizations is a significant indicator of elite positions, less because they confer power themselves than because membership is mostly confined to persons who derive power from other sources.

As legislative body, the Parliament significantly affects the lives of all Romanians on a regular basis. The members of the Parliament are influential in other ways too, partly as a consequence of the electoral law. Following the principle of proportional representation, the seats are allocated to candidates according to the number of votes won by their party in the respective constituency and their position on the party-list hierarchy. Therefore the process of party-list nominations is of crucial importance and as such extremely contested, and personal influence or influence in other fields are decisive. Not in the least, the privileges and rewards - social and economic - associated with the position of Member of Parliament account for the level of competition.

25 The analysis in this section was fulfilled with the help of a Research Support Scheme research grant.

26 See Article 74 "Adopting laws and decisions", Article 75 "Sending bills and legislative proposals from one chamber to the other", and Article 76 "Mediation".

27 Due to the restrictions imposed by this operational definition of the elite, the subsequent analysis refers mainly to the legislative activity.

Obviously this operationalization does not comprise all the members of the political elite, or indeed all most important ones.²⁸ But this circumscription was required by the need for consistent comparable data and availability. For the period of 1990-1992 we appealed to secondary sources, so that the data structure is slightly different.²⁹

The 20 May 1990 elections validated the dominant position of President Ion Iliescu, elected by 85% of the expressed votes. They also confirmed the strength and popularity of his party, Frontul Salvării Naționale (FSN)³⁰ which earned an impressive majority in both Chamber of Deputies (66.42% of votes, 263 seats) and Senate (76.48% of votes, 91 seats). Uniunea Democrată Maghiară din România (UDMR),³¹ Partidul Național Liberal (PNL),³² and Partidul Național Țărănesc - Creștin și Democrat (PNT-CD)³³ constituted the main opposition forces, having cumulated 93 parliamentary seats. The data I will use for the analysis of the Romanian political elite of the first post-communist legislature are taken from Tibil (1995).³⁴

28 Such as members of the government, whether they are affiliated to a political party or not, leaders of influential political parties who hold no positions within the Parliament or the government, leaders of civic organizations concerned with various aspects of policy-making, informal opinion makers etc.

29 George Tibil, "Conflictul elitelor și instabilitatea politică în evoluția modernă și contemporană a României", in *Polis*, 3 (1995), 85-112.

30 National Salvation Front.

31 Hungarian Democratic Alliance of Romania.

32 National Liberal Party.

33 Christian Democrat - National Peasants Party.

34 Data on 462 persons occupying positions of power during 20 May 1990 – 27 September 1992, as follows: 148 FDSN members of parliament, 143 FSN members of parliament, 52 high rank officials of the executive apparatus (ministers, secretaries of state and ambassadors – all part of the Roman government), 96 PNL, PNT-CD, UDMR members of parliament and presidents, vice-presidents or secretary generals of these parties, 12 PDAR members of parliament and 11 PUNR members of parliament. From Tibil, "Conflictul", 103-106, 112.

Table 1. The Romanian political elite, 1990-1992. Data on 410 members of the Romanian Parliament and 52 high rank officials.

	Power				Opposition			
	FDSN ³⁵	FSN	Government	PNT-CD	UDMR	PNL	PDAR ³⁶	PUNR ³⁷
Total	148	143	52	12	35	49	12	11
Mean age³⁸ (years)	47.2	42.9	49.2	69.4	47.7	57.5	50.8	47.9
<i>Education</i>								
No university degree	5 (3%)	7 (4%)	-	-	-	-	-	-
Technical studies	78 (53%)	70 (49%)	20 (39%)	1 (8%)	10 (28%)	9 (18%)	6 (50%)	3 (27%)
Economics	22 (15%)	18 (13%)	11 (21%)	-	5 (14%)	5 (10%)	3 (25%)	2 (18%)
Legal studies	20 (14%)	18 (13%)	10 (19%)	6 (50%)	9 (26%)	19 (39%)	1 (8%)	2 (18%)
Humanist studies	23 (15%)	30 (21%)	11 (21%)	5 (42%)	11 (32%)	16 (33%)	2 (17%)	4 (37%)
<i>Previous path</i>								
Nomenklatura	8 (5%)	3 (2%)	2 (4%)	-	1 (3%)	-	1 (8%)	-
Technocracy	17 (10%)	26 (18%)	24 (46%)	-	5 (14%)	3 (6%)	4 (33%)	2 (18%)
Civil servants	89 (60%)	76 (53%)	14 (26%)	-	9 (26%)	3 (6%)	5 (42%)	4 (37%)
Intellectuals	34 (25%)	38 (27%)	12 (24%)	5 (42%)	20 (57%)	31 (63%)	2 (17%)	5 (45%)
Opponents	-	-	-	7 (58%)	-	18 (25%)	-	-

35 Frontul Democrat al Salvării Naționale, Democratic National Salvation Front, splinter from FSN after disagreements between Iliescu and Roman wings. The former and his followers left the party and set up a new political organization.

36 Partidul Democrat Agrar din România, Democratic Agrarian Party of Romania.

37 Partidul Unității Naționale a Românilor, Party of Romanian National Unity.

38 In 1990.

The heading “Previous path” refers to elite members’ careers before December 1989. The group “Nomenklatura” refers to positions of power and decision at macro-level within the former communist state. The group “Technocracy” is made up of experts and researchers in the political, economic and social academic institutions, as well as members of the central administrative apparatus of planning and control. The group “Civil servants” comprise the medium and lower rank members of the administration – workers in the local administration, managers of state enterprises and agricultural cooperatives (mainly execution, as opposed to command, positions). The group “Intellectuals” denotes individuals in liberal professions (lawyers, medical doctors, university professors, artists etc.), politically uninvolved during the communist years. The category of “opponents” includes the Ceausescu regime dissidents and the marginalized of the communist period, such as members of the leadership of the political parties of the interwar period or political prisoners.³⁹

Symptomatic for a political organization like FSN – which started off as a revolutionary popular movement, but with a far shorter history than its Polish sister Solidarity, and with different startup goals and composition – the transformation into a genuine political party brought to light colliding interests and political strategies. The social characteristics of the parliamentary party members reflect the lack of unity within the party. The table indicates several division lines which, among others, account for the subsequent split of the party.

Using the metaphor of “the war of the roses”,⁴⁰ the press heralded the serious cleavage within the party after the fall of Roman government in September 1991. It was however the result of earlier and more substantial tensions. Right after the 20 May 1990 general elections, several political streams took shape within FSN. This was not a surprise, if we take into account the Front’s original basis and its metamorphosis into a political party. The attempts to define a clear political profile of the party caused animosity, followed by several desertions. After the party Convention in March 1991, the faction led by Velicu Radina, former propaganda secretary of FSN, set up a new party, Frontul Salvării Nationale Social Democrat⁴¹ subsequently renamed Partidul Social Democrat,⁴² despite the protests of the historical party PSDR.⁴³ On the

39 Tibil, “Conflictul”, 105.

40 Alluding to the electoral sign of the party, the rose.

41 Social Democratic National Salvation Front

42 Social Democratic Party.

43 Partidul Social Democrat Român, Romanian Social Democratic Party.

same occasion, a number of deputies decided to leave the FSN parliamentary group and form their own group called FSN-20 Mai (the name was intended to suggest fidelity to the social platform that brought electoral victory to FSN the previous year). This group opposed the economic reforms initiated by the premier's team, deploring the excessive social costs.⁴⁴ Afterwards another FSN faction registered as a political party with the name of FSN-20 Mai, expressing support for president Iliescu.⁴⁵ In spite of these names, the respective parties had little in common with Western social democracy or liberalism and were often labeled by the independent press as conservative or crypto-communist. Other deputies left FSN as well, going towards PNL or PRM.⁴⁶

But the most important fissure followed the resignation of Prime-minister Roman and his government, which marked the beginning of the public dispute between Petre Roman and Ion Iliescu. The conflict concerned the ideological redefinition of the party, Iliescu's attachment to leftist ideas, the content and pace of economic reform, and the Serviciul Român de Informatii (SRI),⁴⁷ denounced of communist practices and hindrance to democracy. The party's March 1992 Convention discussions over the new party platform and Iliescu's candidacy in the oncoming autumn general elections resulted in a schism in the party. The conservative faction, loyal to Iliescu, left the party to form a new political organization (FDSN), FSN remaining under Petre Roman's control.⁴⁸ Despite the massive support of the population and the advantage of parliamentary majority and control of government, internal divisions over ideological and economic issues, as well as internal power struggles, resulted in populist and short term rather than effective, solid and long-term policies.

A brief examination of the data indicates the sharp *age* cleavage. It is no coincidence that the MPs which remained loyal to president Iliescu, generally former communists and party activists, are on average older than the FSN MPs supporting premier Roman. More important however is the age difference between the members of the parties in power and the opposition. The opposition of 1990 comprised primarily the two historical parties PNT-CD and PNL, the two parties that dominated most of the interwar political life. The mean age recorded for PNT-CD in 1990 is extremely old – almost 70 years old; these MPs have on average

44 Subsequently named Partidul Social Liberal, Social Liberal Party.

45 See Dan Ionescu, "Infighting Shakes Romania's Ruling Party", in RFE/RL Research Report, 1: 14 (1992): 24-5.

46 Ionescu, "Infighting", 25.

47 Romanian Intelligence Service.

48 For a detailed account see RFE/RL Research Reports, 1: 4, 14, 16, and 33 (1992).

double the age of their fellow colleagues in FSN and FDSN, representing mathematically the generation of their parents. There is a historical and social significance of this difference, i.e. in terms of early political socialization and experience, ideological affinities and idiosyncrasies, potential and followed careers, experience of the communist period etc. But this age difference also represents a “natural” obstacle in communication, negotiation or interaction, incorporating all the adversities of old age. PNL, the other historical party to obtain significant results in the 1990 poll, was resuscitated by former inter-war members and supporters and in urban areas managed to attract a substantial number of young people to work in their electoral campaign. However, young people’s access to high positions in the party or electoral lists remained extremely limited. The mean age of PNL MPs is also relatively high (around 57 years old), significantly higher than the average age of senators and deputies of the party in power.

The educational background of the members of parliament constitutes another significant cleavage at the level of the first post-communist political elite. Technical training is dominant among the MPs of the power, indicating a disposition for a pragmatic approach of politics and a non-discursive worldview. They were educated during the communist regime and the propensity for technical studies reflects the communist state’s emphasis on this type of training in its effort to modernize and industrialize Romania, respectively the changes in the structure of Romanian higher education system, as a result of the political demand for specialists in constructions, steel industry, mechanical engineering etc.

On the other hand, the bulk of opposition MPs (PNT-CD and PNL) was trained in the legal and humanist professions.⁴⁹ Law constituted one of the main careers during between the wars, ensuring an easy upward social mobility. Law is generally the closest profession to politics, as it provides familiarity with law-making, abilities to effectively plead the causes of interested clients, and knowledge of constitutional bases of the state. Contrary to other professions where interruption usually means career regress, the legal profession may be practiced intermittently: a lawyer or jurist may easily return to his private activity once the public office ended. Humanist training indicates analytical, discursive and ethical dispositions, approaches with relatively high level of abstraction, certain radicalism and a relative lack of pragmatism. All these in interaction with

⁴⁹ This difference is in a great part accounted by the age gap between the two groups, respectively the level of development of the educational system in Romania and the educational practices (such as study abroad) of the periods during which the respective groups reached maturity.

strong emotions produced a discourse that fiercely conflicted with the power's, in both form and content.

The analysis of the symbolic and political capital of the members of the Romanian political elite also indicates a profound division between the power and the opposition. While FSN (and FDSN) sent to Parliament a considerable number of former members of the nomenklatura and the party technocracy, and workers in the communist administration, none of the PNT-CD MPs belong in any of these categories. The opposition is composed mainly of intellectuals, dissidents, or marginalized of the former regime. If we attach names to the cases in the analysis, the power – opposition cleavage gains even more sense: the Parliament was the setting where PNT-CD leaders Corneliu Coposu, Valentin Gabrielescu, Ion Diaconescu, all of which having spent more than 10 years in communist prisons, confronted the powerful of the day Ion Iliescu, Alexandru Bârladeanu, Dan Martian, former bosses of the previous regime or high rank officers of the Securitate.

Within the opposition, the ethnic Hungarian party is singular, in that it attracted both members of the former communist apparatus and intellectuals and professionals uninvolved in the administration of the previous regime. UDMR also comprised a relatively equal number of individuals trained in technical, economics, legal and humanist disciplines.

The data reveal significant cleavages at the level of the Romanian political elite constituted after the fall of the Ceausescu rule, in terms of interests, educational profile, political socialization, ideological dispositions and practices, age and individual social and political trajectory. They are indicators and explanatory variables for the incapacity to perform an efficient legislative activity. These divisions partially determined the line of the debates, often deteriorating into personal fights, as former oppressors and oppressed confronted in an arena where values and principles were discussed. The main division lines of the first post-communist Romanian political elite can thus be summarized as follows:

1. *The communist experience* and the type of political capital acquired as a result of the trajectory during the communist period. At one end of the axis there are the open regime opponents, and at the other end there are the holders of power positions within the system. The first trajectory brought a fragile but potentially large symbolic capital, to be exploited immediately after the fall of the regime, during the rapid process of re-constitution of power - the 'returns' of the years spent in communist prisons. The latter yielded the social capital of the communist networks and the control over their

institutionalized forms. Naturally, the different trajectories meant also different socializing institutions and experiences, different ideological loyalties, different patterns of political recruitment and their consequences, different governing practices. The communist experience also structured the post-revolutionary discourses and the consequent attachments of the population. While the radicalism of the intellectual democratic opposition turned the masses away, the populist, reconciliatory discourse of the power gained them a sustainable sympathy.

2. The moment of the *revolution*. The active participation in the revolutionary events of 22-25 December 1989 (in Bucharest) produced a huge symbolic capital for the actors of the moment. Obviously, the degree to which they managed to convert it into sound political capital depended on abilities and experience, as well as on access to state or other institutional resources. The apparatchiks of the former regime were undoubtedly much better prepared to understand and use the context of the reconstitution of power. Thus recycled communists were the ones who managed to dominate the process of redefinition of political rules and institutions.
3. The *institutionalization process*. Open to a full reconstruction, the political field had become a space for power struggles. At stake were the institutions and their form, positions within these institutions, type and volume of power attached to them etc. Both the power and the opposition of the moment were divided, while trying to secure as much power for their positions as possible, and the resulting institutions bear the mark of these divisions.⁵⁰ The fall and the birth of regimes are best moments for upward mobility.

Comparative data for Hungary (see Tables 2 and 3)⁵¹ disclose a different kind of fragmentation of the political elite. The difference between the two types of fragmentation is a substantial one. In Romania of the first post-communist legislature, the cleavages at the level of the elite (oppressors versus oppressed, ex-nomenklatura versus marginalized of the communist regime) were much sharper than the cleavages within the society (a flattened, atomised, homogenised population). By this I also mean that the fragmentation of the Romanian political elite reflected

50 The premier presidentialist system, the bi-cameral parliament, respectively the large number of seats and the perfectly equal prerogatives of the chambers.

51 The explanation is only tentative, as the Hungarian data available for comparison are structured according to slightly different variables and categories.

personal conflicts and resentments, rather than various interests articulated at the level of the society. As Pasti put it, the multi-party system in Romania was utilised in order to maintain a system that lacked politics.⁵²

On the contrary, the Hungarian parliamentary parties expressed a series of cleavages existing within the society, in a manner similar to the institutionalised forms of pluralist representation of the consolidated democracies. The members of the Hungarian political elite were recruited from and represented definite social and occupational groups (differentiated by variables such as previous political integration, religious socialisation, occupation, social origin) and their political influence is significant for all parties.⁵³

Table 2. Indicators of political integration of the members of the Hungarian Parliament, by party, 1990-1994. The figures represent percentages.⁵⁴

	Power			Opposition		
	MDF	SZDSZ	FKGP	MSZP	Fidesz	KDNP
Previous political path⁵⁵						
Former MSZMP member	6.5	4.0	0.0	88.6	0.0	0.0
Leadership position during the communist period	31.1	24.2	38.6	78.8	0.0	0.0
Victim of persecution	36.1	45.5	59.6	22.7	22.7	63.6
Oppositional past	31.7	26.3	43.2	6.0	9.1	28.6
World-view⁵⁶						
Hungarian/national	92.1	2.1	65.9	3.0	4.5	36.4
Christian/religious	56.7	16.8	68.2	0.0	40.9	100.0
Liberal	24.4	72.6	2.3	6.1	100.0	0.0
Left wing	1.8	4.2	2.3	60.6	4.5	0.0
Social-democratic	0.0	4.2	0.0	51.5	18.2	0.0
Radical	3.7	9.5	2.3	3.0	27.3	0.0

52 Vladimir Pasti, *România în Tranzitie. Caderea în viitor* (Bucuresti: Nemira, 1996), 141.

53 See Pasti, *România*, 107-149, and András Körösiényi, *Government and Politics in Hungary* (Budapest: CEU Press & Osiris, 1999), 99-100.

54 Source: Körösiényi, *Government*, 83-5, 87-9.

55 The figures are based on self-descriptions and as such they only indicate tendencies.

56 Self-declared ideology. The label "democratic" chosen by all is not shown in the table. The option "other", mentioned by 24.4% of MDF deputies and 78.8% of MSZP deputies, is not shown either.

Table 3. Indicators of social integration of the members of the Hungarian Parliament, by party, 1990-1994. The figures represent percentages.⁵⁷

	Power			Opposition		
	MDF	SZDSZ	FKGP	MSZP	Fidesz	KDNP
Social origin						
Middle class	40.2	47.5	25.5	25.0	59.1	50.0
Lower middle class						
Farming	11.2	6.1	34.0	9.1	4.5	9.1
Working class	24.3	20.2	21.3	34.1	13.6	13.6
Cadre	1.2	4.0	0.0	13.6	0.0	0.0
Other/ No data	1.2	4.0	4.3	0.0	4.5	0.0
Residence						
Budapest	65.8	45.7	30.8	26.8	40.0	54.5
Other town	26.3	47.2	38.4	62.2	60.0	41.0
Smaller community	7.9	7.1	30.8	11.0	-	4.5
Education (university)						
Father	38.4	44.2	20.4	36.4	63.6	42.2
MP	72.6	80.8	56.8	72.7	63.3	85.7
Religious cleavage						
Religious family background						
Himself religious	35.5	28.3	63.8	4.5	22.7	95.5

The *different democratisation paths* followed by the two countries explain this essential difference. It goes back to the post-Stalinist period, when the Hungarian and the Romanian communist states started to diverge in terms of political and economic policies. Hungary experienced a process of liberalisation of the economic sphere facilitated by a political approach that traded off the acknowledgement of the leadership of the communist party for consumerism. This allowed the emergence of a busy secondary market economy, bringing a certain social-economic differentiation of the society. The loss of legitimacy and eventual abandonment of any role for the party ideology left way for the rise of a space of intellectual debate, to which the reformist section of the party contributed too.

The transition to a democratic institutional framework was negotiated. Moreover, unlike in Poland where Solidarity overestimated

⁵⁷ Source: Körösiényi, Government, 83-5, 87-9.

the strength of the communist party and entered the negotiations from a subordinate position, the various opposition parties in Hungary managed to organise themselves and to set the framework of the discussion on an equal foot with the parties of the regime. Romania, whose system developed into a sultanist-totalitarian regime, did not allow the building of any opposition forces. The state institutions (such as the military) were themselves controlled, debilitated and ineffective. The population was subjected and controlled through everyday time and energy consuming survival activities (queues for food, lack of electricity and heating, compulsory extra hours of work etc.). More than in any other former Soviet bloc country, the first years of the Romanian democracy consisted of mass movement politics and populist leadership.

The moment the Hungarian communist party, Magyar Szocialista Munkárpárt (MSZMP)⁵⁸ accepted a multi-party system, in its Central Committee meeting of 10-11 February 1989, the democratic opposition had already been organized into a series of distinct and coherent ideological parties. Unlike in Romania, where FSN (conceived by many analysts as the successor party of the Romanian communist party) dominated the political space and won comfortably the first free and contested elections, the political power in Hungary was fiercely disputed. The socialist party faced the contention of parties set up and developed within the anticommunist opposition of the 1970s and 1980s. The (permitted) public debates after 1987 had made possible that they become publicly known and legitimate (including the historical parties – such as Független Kisgazdapárt (FKGP)⁵⁹ and Kereszténydemokrata Néppárt (KDNP).⁶⁰ Due to the popularity of the Németh regime and minimal likelihood of direct personal repercussions for the reform communists, the decision to “play the democratic game” seemed rational, irrespective of the inner convictions of individual actors.⁶¹

The possibility of a negotiated transition and the circumstances of this process in Hungary favored the emergence of democratic institutions that are more compatible with the normative ideals and practices of democracy.⁶² In Romania, the political transition consisted practically in the act of reading the program-platform of the Council of

58 Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party.

59 The Independent Smallholders' Party.

60 Christian Democratic People's Party.

61 Grigore Pop-Eleches, "Separated at Birth or Separated by Birth? The Communist Successor Parties in Romania and Hungary", in *East European Politics and Societies*, 13: 1 (1999): 144.

62 E.g. The Hungarian electoral law insures a stronger link between the electorate and the representatives than its Romanian counterpart. The provisions for government change increase its stability.

the FSN in the afternoon of the 22nd of December 1989, succeeded by a series of decrees and decree-laws issued by this political body in the following weeks. This legislative course lacked clear goals and objectives, except for the stringent need to reverse legislation that profoundly hurt the privacy and autonomy of the Romanians.⁶³ The period of provisional rule was not one of negotiations, discussions or debates. It had rather a declamatory quality, as if people tried to express all repressed words then and there and as if their truth was the “Truth” and needed to be asserted as such. The FSN ruled constrained by urgency, without outlining principles and long-term strategies, and without really consulting the public⁶⁴ (more or less a mass) although they followed a populist approach. The subsequent debates over the basic institutions were marked by lack of consensus (see the discussions within the Constituent Assembly) and the approval of the Constitution was in a great part the result of FSN domination in the Parliament.

The elite of the new socialist party Magyar Szocialista Párt (MSZP),⁶⁵ the successor of the Hungarian communist party, comes from the political class of the communist system – the nomenklatura. Most of the MSZP’s MPs are former communist party members and held leadership positions during the communist period. They benefited from the privileges of the communist regime – the high percentage of higher education graduates being one indicator. The political recruitment path was the integration into the communist structures – the political elite of this party was recruited from the former communist party functionaries, youth organization and trade unions, local administration and enterprise managers. The political class cleavage constituted one of the lines of political division in Hungary. However it gradually lost salience with the rise of extremist parties and as the party undertook an ideology-free pragmatic stance.⁶⁶

The second cleavage to be found both at the level of the population and of the political elite is the religious/secular divide. The conservative parties represent the Christian morals and policies, and religion (the Catholic Church). Their associated world-view and social organizations constitute an important basis of voting-behavior. The MPs of the two Christian-democratic parties FKGP and KDNP are either of lower

63 Such as pro-natalist, compulsory work-place assignment, mobility-restricting legislation etc.

64 Such as the Hungarian 1989 referendum on the dissolution of the Workers Militia, the banishment of party activity from work-places, MSZMP account for its property and the timing and the procedure of the presidential election.

65 Hungarian Socialist Party.

66 Subsequently these tendencies in the Hungarian political field made possible the MSZP-SZDSZ coalition between 1994-1998.

middle-class and farmer origin (the former), or of middle class and petty bourgeois origin, being strongly integrated by the Catholic subculture (the latter). They were generally associated with a low volume of political capital and high levels of persecution. The specificity of the FKGP is its rural-agrarian character. One third of the MPs of this party descend from farmer, land owner, families. Most of them reside in the rural area and have relatively low levels of formal education – they come primarily from the provincial middle class with agricultural backgrounds. Their group consists mainly of autonomous farmers, whose social status deteriorated during the communist period – mainly as a result of their system marginality and lack of political integration. It is a radically anti-communist party and campaigned for the re-privatization of the land.

Magyar Demokrata Fórum (MDF),⁶⁷ the other “religious” party is much more heterogeneous. Most of the MPs of this party came from the middle stratum of the 1970s and 1980s. They were not part of the nomenklatura, nor did they belong to the social groups subjected to communist persecution. About half of the MDF MPs of the 1990-1994 legislature were high school and university teachers and medical doctors – they were part of the local social elite (i.e. they won seats in single-member districts).⁶⁸ The party was oriented towards national and democratic values, national traditions, and supported a third way worldview between capitalism and communism.

The anti-clerical part was represented by the left-wing and liberal parties (MSZP, SZDSZ, and Fidesz). Szabad Demokraták Szövetsége (SZDSZ)⁶⁹ elite was recruited mainly from the urban educated middle class and the intelligentsia, and was composed of left-wing sociologists, philosophers, and economists questioning the Marxist doctrine. They published extensive samizdat literature and developed a political thinking based on human rights and democratic institutions. Fiatal Demokraták Szövetsége (Fidesz)⁷⁰ was formed as a youth political organization – put into motion by an alternative, activist youth sub-culture, radical anti-communism and political liberalism. While their initial allies from SZDSZ were trained mainly in humanist sciences, the Fidesz elite was primarily

⁶⁷ Hungarian Democratic Forum.

⁶⁸ The Hungarian electoral system is one of the most complex, and combines the proportional representation principle (county-based party-list system, 152 seats) and the majority principle (single-member district system, 176 seats); some 58 remaining seats are distributed according to the proportionality principle, using national party lists. Obviously, the electoral design has important consequences in what concerns the shape of the outcomes. See Körösenyi, Government, chapter 7, “The Electoral System and Elections”, 117-132.

⁶⁹ Alliance of Free Democrats SZDSZ.

⁷⁰ Federation of Young Democrats.

trained in law. Moreover, they were generally first-generation university graduates, which explains their increasing radicalism.⁷¹

The rural/urban divide constitutes the third cleavage in Hungarian politics. FKGP supported agricultural sectoral interests, was characterized by agrarian populism, national radicalism and anti-communism, and both FKGP and KDNP were massively voted by rural-residents and the less educated. The liberal parties stay on the other side of the divide, situated on an economic right and a rather libertarian-progressive, ideological-cultural left.

The multi-party system is better institutionalized in Hungary in terms of mass-elite links (aggregation of representation and electorate control) which, on a background of institutionalized interactions, may form the foundation of a “competitive cooperation”.⁷² Romania is still far from this model. Analyzing the political field in 1995, Vladimir Pasti maintains that the Romanian political elite (that is, the government) does not govern, but, at the most, administers, and that the political parties are not significant for the government and political life.⁷³ The power, he suggested, belongs to the industrial technocracy (managers and upper echelon of state and mixed enterprises’ hierarchy, respectively the private industrial business potentates) and administration (state bureaucracy), controlled by the former.⁷⁴

Moreover, the institutional setup of the Hungarian political space is conducive to efficiency and stability. The parliamentary system, with a single chamber parliament, and such constitutional provisions that make extremely difficult a government reshuffle are factors that favor negotiation strategies and constructive dialogue.

The sociological analyses that attempted to approach theoretically the re-structuring of the post-communist societies and identify the new dominant class generally follow two patterns of intellectual endeavor. The first one, relatively popular during the latter part of the 1980s and the first years of post-communist transition, tried to apply classical capitalism theory to the post-communist societies (in transition), following the logic of classes and class-formation and trying to identify the process of accumulation of capital and the new propertied classes. Two answers were given within this approach, that we can generically call

71 After 1994 Fidesz took a clear turn to the right, becoming an integrative force of the right and center.

72 Guillermo O’Donnell, (1993), “Delegative Democracy” (Notre Dame: Helen Kellogg Institute for International Studies Working Paper #172, 1993), 8.

73 Pasti, România, 107-149, respectively 234-273.

74 Pasti, România, 140.

theories of elite reproduction, respectively theories of elite circulation. The elite reproduction theories identify in the nomenklatura and the communist cadres the new dominant class, which can capitalize political connections into wealth through securing former “common property” and through the advantage they hold in acquiring former state property.⁷⁵ Through informal channels, exploiting the institutional and legislative obscurity, the cadres may transform their limited control over the state property into quasi-possession or possession. Staniszkis employed the term “political capitalism” to describe the direct conversion of communist political power into economic might. She argued that in the process of the transition to a market economy strategically located cadres could take advantage of their positions in acquiring state property. The elite circulation theories are theories of structural compensation. In this view, the new class of proprietors would comprise the second economy entrepreneurs. The power will be located in the market institutions and commercial activity networks, while the (political) capital of the former cadres will devalue hindering their attempts to enter private entrepreneurship.⁷⁶

The other types of analysis⁷⁷ are most often reformulations of the old “new class” theories.⁷⁸ Konrád and Szelényi had written, during the mid 1970s, a book that announced the future power alliance between the intellectuals and technocrats on one hand, and the communist bureaucracy on the other hand, against the working class.⁷⁹ That this did

75 József Böröcz, “Simulating the great transformation: property change under prolonged informality in Hungary”, in *Archives Européennes de Sociologie*, 34 (1993), 81-106; József Böröcz, Ákos Róna-Tas, (1995), “Formation of New Economic Elites: Hungary, Poland and Russia.”, in *Theory and Society*, 24: 5 (1995): 751-781; Elemér Hankiss, *East European Alternatives*, (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1990); Ákos Róna-Tas, “The First Shall Be Last? Entrepreneurship and Communist Cadres in the Transition”, in *American Journal of Sociology*, 100: 1 (1994): 40-69; Jadwiga Staniszkis, *The Dynamics of the Breakthrough in Eastern Europe. The Polish Experience* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991).

76 Victor Nee (1991), “Social Inequalities in Reforming State Socialism: Between Redistribution and Markets in China”, in *American Sociological Review*, 56:2 (1991), 267-282; Victor Nee, David Stark, eds., *Remaking of the Economic Institutions of Socialism: China and Eastern Europe* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1996).

77 Eyal, Townsley, Szelényi (1997) ʔi (1998), Szalai (1989) ʔi (1995). Gil Eyal, Elinor Townsley, Iván Szelényi, *Making Capitalism Without Capitalists: Class Formation and Elite Struggles in Post-Communist Central Europe* (London: Verso, 1998); Erzsébet Szalai, “The Metamorphosis of the Elites”, in András Bozóki, Béla K. Kiraly, eds., *Lawful Revolution in Hungary, 1989-1994* (Boulder: Columbia University Press, Social Science Monographs, 1995), 159-74.

78 Classical theorists in this line are Bakunin and Machajski (social ideology intelligentsia), Djilas (party bureaucracy), Burnham (managerial class), respectively Trilling, Kristol, Moynihan (the educated class, sharing the culture of critical discourse).

79 György Konrád, Iván Szelényi, *The Intellectuals on the Road to Class Power* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1979).

not happen they subsequently tried to explain in studies that amended the initial theory. They developed an analysis in Marxist vein, introducing the concept of “mode of economic integration” for the socialist systems to replace the outdated and inadequate term of “mode of production”. They talked about the position with regard to the redistribution of the product, rather than the position with regard to the means of production. Making use of an impressive amount of empirical data, Szelényi et al. formulated a new theory of the dominant class – the post-communist managerialism. According to this, the new ruling class will comprise the managers (controllers of productive assets), former members of the industrial technocracy and the political elite/ nomenklatura.

Except for Nee’s analyses, based on the case of China, all the others, irrespective of their theoretical standpoint, indicate an important rate of survival of the former communist political elite, especially if its various forms of political capital were accompanied by cultural capital. It shares the power with the managers – the former communist industrial technocracy. What I believe to be important for the process of democratization is how the members of the former communist elite defined and understood the new situation and how they coped with it.

If the characteristics of the former non-democratic regime shaped the path of transition to democracy and the new institutions of the state and the political practices of the new political elite, the secondary and long-term consequences of its policies affected the performance and efficiency of the post-communist government as well. It is sufficient to mention the example of the economic policies and conditions. In the year of 1989, Romania and Hungary reached two profoundly different situations. The “gulyás” communism of the latter allowed a continuous economic liberalization, accelerated by the increasingly influent reformist wing of the Hungarian communist party. State control and central planning were abandoned in favor of private forms of economic activity and property, allowing the emergence of a competitive market system and a banking system. Thus by mid 1990s, despite the Antall-Boros government gradual approach of the reform, Hungary enjoyed a largely privatized economy, with solid institutional bases and significant foreign investment.⁸⁰

Romania on the other hand, whose neo-Stalinist economy had promoted inefficient industrial policies based on the construction of heavy industry sites and managed according to the logic of “soft-budget

80 Pop-Eleches, “Separated at Birth”, 138-9.

constraints”,⁸¹ was economically isolated. The country’s trade structures had been undermined by the drastic reduction of consumption in the 1980s. The population quite naturally expressed a strong aversion for economic policies that would require additional sacrifices with regard to the quality of life, as a result of the experiences of the previous decade. Thus, if it had opted for important reforms, the first post-communist government would have met serious obstacles. Moreover, the only apparent advantage of Romania over Hungary – the lack of external debt, compared to Hungary’s 21.3 billion-dollar debt in 1990 – may have worked against it. The Hungarian government was forced to adopt a more reformist position and to follow strictly the requirements and directives of the Western financial institutions in order to secure further financing. On the other hand, Hungary’s important debt maintained and raised Western interest in its economy and may have contributed to a more rapid integration into the Western European space. On the contrary, the lack of external debt and the isolationism of the last years of the Ceaușescu regime removed the foreign financial institutions and firms from Romania. After December 1989, the incoherent, difficult and unstable economic legislation, the obscurity of property regulations, and corruption further deterred foreign investment in this country.⁸²

Continued lack of integration. The Romanian political elite 1992-1996 and 1996-2000.

Many of the theoreticians of democracy, democratization and consolidation include as final criterion for the completion of the transition to democracy, alongside the introduction of democratic institutions and procedures, the change of the party (or coalition) in power as a result of free and contested democratic elections. It is conceived as an indicator of the fact that the institutions function and are substantial. This was salient for the case of Romania, as many political

81 In János Kornai’s terminology for the socialist political economy, based on collective (state) ownership of the means of production and centralized management of the productive activity, “soft-budget constraints” described the practice of bailing out firms that performed badly, keeping the financial penalty for “irrational” or “inefficient” behavior minimal.

82 Pop-Eleches, “Separated at Birth”, 140. Foreign investment in Romania during 1990-1996 was 1.2 bn dollars, amounting to less than 30% of the foreign investment in Hungary for the year of 1995 alone. (4.5 bn dollars). The privatization program was very slow and relatively unsuccessful. In 1993 the total number of companies open for privatization was 5937, of which only 265 managed to get into private hands, and only one was bought by foreign investors. The correspondent figures for the following years are: 1994 – 6291/ 595/ 1; 1995 – 7602/ 620/ 5; 1996 – 9010/ 1245/ 4. Source: Business Central Europe.

analysts, identifying a certain continuity of ideology, persons and institutions with the former communist regime, considered that this country did not undergo a real political change, equating the results of the first democratic elections with a communist restoration. The first change in power as a result of free and contested elections took place in the autumn of 1996.

The general elections in 1992 confirmed the ascent of the democratic opposition, already signaled by the local elections held in the spring of the same year, when it won in the major cities including the capital Bucharest. Although the results were below their expectations, the coalition of parties led by PNT-CD named *Conventia Democrată din România* (CDR)⁸³ obtained a quarter of the seats in Parliament, and together with PD gathered cumulated more seats than the winner PDSR. The introduction of an electoral threshold cleared the political field by keeping out of Parliament the parties that did not manage to obtain 3% of the votes. The 1992 elections also marked the rise of the nationalist and cultural extreme right parties PUNR and PRM, at some point co-opted in government.

CDR, whose electoral campaign was based on several ideas and concepts convenient for the moment and context, won the 1996 elections. These were the following: the truth regarding the December 1989 revolution, the fight against corruption, the former Securitate files, the acceleration of the economic reform (and implicitly of the privatization), the restoration of property. All of them signified and gave a name to the wish for radical change, in contrast to the procrastination of the PDSR government.

Table 4. The results of the general elections in Romania, 3 November 1996.

Party	Senate (% of votes)	House of the Deputies (% of votes)
CDR	30,70%	30,17%
PDSR	23,08%	21,52%
USD	13,16%	12,93%
UDMR	6,82%	6,64%
PRM	4,54%	4,46%
PUNR	4,22%	4,36%
Others/Independents/ Minorities	17,48%	19,92%

83 Romanian Democratic Convention

In order to discern the continuities and changes in the Romanian political elite, the following set of data comprise social-demographic and political characteristics of the members of the Romanian Parliament for the 1992-1996 and 1996-2000 legislatures.

Table 5. The Romanian political elite 1992-1996. Data for 361 members of Parliament (out of 483) representing the main political parties that obtained seats in the 1992 general elections. Author's database. Information collected from the Parliament's official publications.

	Power			Opposition		
	PDSR ⁸⁴	PUNR	PRM ⁸⁵	PNT-CD	PD ⁸⁶	UDMR
Total	165	44	22	61	60	39
(%)	(34.2)	(9.1)	(4.6)	(12.6)	(12.4)	(8.1)
Mean age (years)⁸⁷	48.2	48.3	53.6	57.0	44.5	45.4
(Standard deviation)	(8.95)	(7.66)	(8.89)	(12.78)	(8.59)	(10.03)
Education (%)⁸⁸						
No university degree	3.6	-	2.3	8.2	5	2.6
Sciences, technical	37.6	38.6	27.3	36.1	48.3	28.2
Humanities	4.8	6.8	13.6	6.6	3.3	7.7
Social sciences	12.7	20.5	22.7	9.8	3.3	10.3
Economics	13.9	6.8	9.1	3.3	13.3	12.8
Legal studies	7.3	9.8	4.5	26.2	13.3	25.6
Agricultural	9.7	4.9	9.1	4.9	3.3	5.1
Other	6.6	7.3	9.1	6.6	8.3	5.1

84 Partidul Democraticei Sociale din România, Party of Social Democracy in Romania, former FDSN.

85 Partidul România Mare, Greater Romania Party, led by Corneliu Vadim Tudor.

86 Partidul Democrat, Democratic Party, ex-FSN, successor of the reformist splinter faction of the original FSN, led by ex-prime minister Petre Roman.

87 In 1992.

88 The rest up to 100% are missing data.

Table 6. The Romanian political elite, 1996-2000. Data for 411 members of Parliament (out of 485) representing the main political parties that obtained seats in the 1996 elections. Author's database. Information collected from the Parliament's official publications.

	Power			Opposition			
	PNT-CD	PD	PNL	UDMR	PDSR	PRM	PUNR
Total	90	64	43	36	127	27	24
(%)	(18.6)	(13.2)	(8.9)	(7.4)	(26.2)	(5.6)	(4.9)
Mean age (years)⁸⁹	53.2	47.7	49.2	45.9	50.8	53.7	50.3
(Standard deviation)	(13.3)	(6.8)	(12.4)	(9.8)	(8.6)	(9.8)	(7.4)
Education (%)⁹⁰							
No university degree	4.4	3.2	-	5.6	1.6	-	-
Sciences, technical	45.6	46.9	37.2	19.4	35.4	37.0	33.3
Humanities	6.7	-	2.3	5.6	1.6	11.1	8.3
Social sciences	8.9	7.8	9.3	2.8	7.9	18.5	33.3
Economics	-	10.9	7.0	8.3	15.7	7.4	4.2
Legal studies	11.1	9.4	18.6	33.3	9.4	7.4	4.2
Agricultural	1.1	4.7	-	5.6	7.1	-	8.3
Military academy	-	1.6	-	-	2.4	-	-
Other	12.2	6.3	11.6	11.1	7.9	7.4	-

I have included in the analysis the most important parliamentary parties representing the power and the opposition. The data contain information for the years of 1992 and 1996 and do not consider the subsequent alterations, due to decease and replacements, and especially to desertion – as many deputies and senators declared themselves independents or left their parties for others they thus chose to represent.⁹¹ The first noticeable change from the first 1990 legislature is the constant decline in the average age of PNT-CD MPs, from 69.4 in 1990 to 57 in 1992 to 53.2 years old in 1996. The PNL presence is also a rejuvenated one as PNL MPs' average age decreased from 57.5 in 1990

⁸⁹ In 1996.

⁹⁰ The rest up to 100% are missing data.

⁹¹ By the end of their mandate in 2000 approximately 10% of the MPs were in this situation. A more recent study shows that one year after the local elections in 2000 the rate of migration among mayors was 22%. Out of 2957 mayors elected in June 2000, 651 had changed party affiliation by June 2001, of which 535 migrated from other parties to PDSR. Institutul de Politici Publice, "Migratia politica în administratia locala la un an de la alegerile locale 2000. Studiu la nivelul primarilor", (2001): 11-13.

to 49.2 in 1996. This “renewal” of the main parties in government flattens the age difference within the Parliament, situating them in the same generation as the other party in government PD, and the opposition parties. At first sight, an external observer would interpret this as a generation change. In reality, the seniors of the party (in both senses of the word) conserved their position, while the better electoral performance of these two parties allowed that a number of younger persons also access the Parliament. Thus, the average age of the 38 PNT-CD MPs of the 1996-2000 legislature who conserved their seats (i.e. took part in at least one other legislature) is 57.3, and the average age of those who took part in all post-1989 legislatures is 68.3. This holds true for PNL as well, as those who took part in at least one other legislature are on average 59.6 years old. The high standard deviations for the variable age, 13.3 for PNT-CD and 12.4 for PNL, which are almost double than the figure for PD (6.8) or PDSR (8.6), also indicate the big generation gap within the parties.

The average age of members of other parties is slightly higher than the same figures for 1990. This only reflects the fact that the same people grew older. In order to have a better understanding of the continuity and change of the composition of the Parliament, here is the rate of reproduction of the parliamentary positions.

Table 7. Reproduction of the parliamentary positions. Members of the 1996-2000 legislature who held seats in the 1990-1992 or 1992-1996 legislatures, and in both. Percentages from the total of MPs of the respective parties. Author’s database. Information collected from the Parliament’s official publications.

Party	1990-1992	1992-1996	both
PNT-CD	7 (7.8%)	38 (42.2%)	7 (7.8%)
PD	28 (43.8%)	31 (48.4%)	21 (32.8%)
PNL	4 (9.3%)	8 (18.6%)	1 (2.3%)
UDMR	15 (41.7%)	23 (63.9%)	14 (39.9%)
PDSR	28 (22.0%)	49 (38%)	28 (22.0%)
Total	94 (19.4)	194 (40%)	71 (19.7%)

The case of UDMR reflects best the phenomenon. As the party with the most stable electorate, comprising the ethnic Hungarian population from Romania, it has a relatively constant representation in the Parliament and therefore can provide the best indication of the rate of parliamentary seat reproduction. If however UDMR's command of the Hungarian electorate has been contested lately by local particular interests and strategies, it nonetheless managed to compete in national elections as sole ethnic Hungarian party so far and to retain a constant loyalty and mobilization of the Hungarian voters. Thus, if the electoral success of the party, measured in percentage of parliamentary seats is controlled, the rate of parliamentary seat reproduction for the period 1992-1996 is on average about two thirds of the MPs.

With respect to the educational profile of the parties in power, a shift from the humanist and juridical sciences to technical sciences is noticeable. This correlates with the process of renewal of the party representatives in the Parliament. Thus, the dominance of technical specialization only reflects the structure of the Romanian higher educational system by the end of the 1960s, beginning of the 1970s, when most of the newcomers pursued their studies.

There is a significant proportion of PUNR and PRM MPs who graduated in the social sciences – and this indicates and explains the type of discourse and world-vision they employ. The ideologization of the studies in social sciences during the communist period is common knowledge. One of the aims of the departments of History and Philosophy, indeed their main goal, was to produce “ideologues”, to supply the continuous need of the system's infrastructure. Most of the PUNR and PRM MPs practice a discursive, demagogic and charismatic approach to politics, their addresses and behavior are larded with appeals to emotionally powerful symbols and representations. They lack familiarity with economic, juridical and technical notions, and are as remote as possible from concrete policies and problem solving.⁹² Their discourse identifies enemies and dangers that they pledge to defeat. Their target population are the individuals whose social situation contains a specific dimension of insecurity and uncertainty. Among their voters are the uprooted (rural migrants into cities), Romanians who feel threatened by the “Hungarian danger”, persons that long for an authoritarian, providing, controlling, paternal state, insecure of their jobs, people who suffer of what I call the “syndrome of acquired helplessness” and so on.

⁹² Except for solutions such as that offered by Vadim Tudor in the 2000 electoral campaign when he promised to rule with the machine-gun in order to stop corruption and to nationalize all big fortunes in order to correct its results.

The following table shows succinctly how the voters of PUNR and PRM differ from the total population of voters, in terms of variables that operationalize insecurity.

Table 8. Profile of PUNR and PRM voters. Data from the Public Opinion Barometer, The Foundation for an Open Society Romania, 1999. The figures represent percentages.

	PUNR, PRM voters (N=100)	All voters (N=2019)
Not at all happy with the life they live	46%	37.7%
They live worse at present than they did the previous year	33%	23.7%
Membership in a non-profit organization	1%	3.9%
They are most afraid of the prices (first option)	37%	31%
They are most afraid of the future of their children (second option)	19%	12.4%

If this Parliament is more homogeneous in terms of age and educational profile, there remain important lines of fragmentation. At the level of the main party PNT-CD, one can still find a serious age cleavage with all the distinctions associated. Despite the co-optation of younger persons, the “seniors” dominate decision-making.

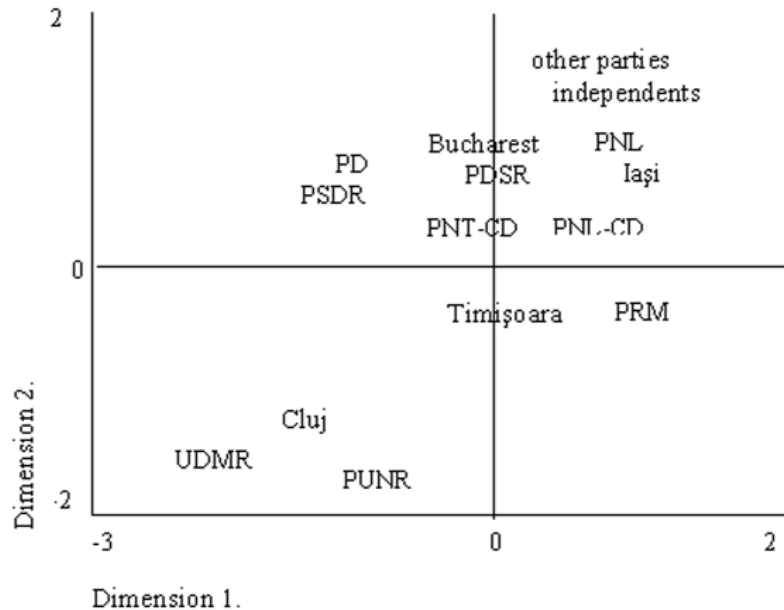
Strife characterized the relationship between the governing parties PNT-CD and PD. On most salient issues these two parties did not manage to get to an understanding. One important cause of disagreement seems to be the differentiated importance they attached to various problems such as the restitution of nationalized property, the access to the Securitate files etc. If we scrutinize the data in the above tables we may attribute this conflict, apart from personal and party political and economic interests, to a different definition and understanding of the situation. Not one economist from the part of PNT-CD entered the Parliament, while 7 PD MPs were economists. While members of PD had already had the exercise of power and a longer history of post-revolutionary politics, several leading figures of PNT-CD were newcomers, unacquainted and untrained in the game of politics.

Opposed to this inapt power coalition stood PDSR whose winning game was to build on the dissension of the parties in power. The substantial group of “ideologues” within the other opposition parties PUNR and PRM, practicing nationalist and authoritarian discourses,

xenophobia and demagoguery, certainly contributed to the loss of credibility and sharp decline of the governing coalition and its members in Parliament. Their equally inapt discourses further hindered the convergence of opinions and reach of consensus in decision-making, augmenting the polarization.

The following diagrams give a perceptual map of the structure of the Romanian political field at the level of elite.

Diagram 1. The Romanian political elite. Homogeneity analysis for variables “party”, “university center of study”, “parliamentarian seat reproduction”, “age”).

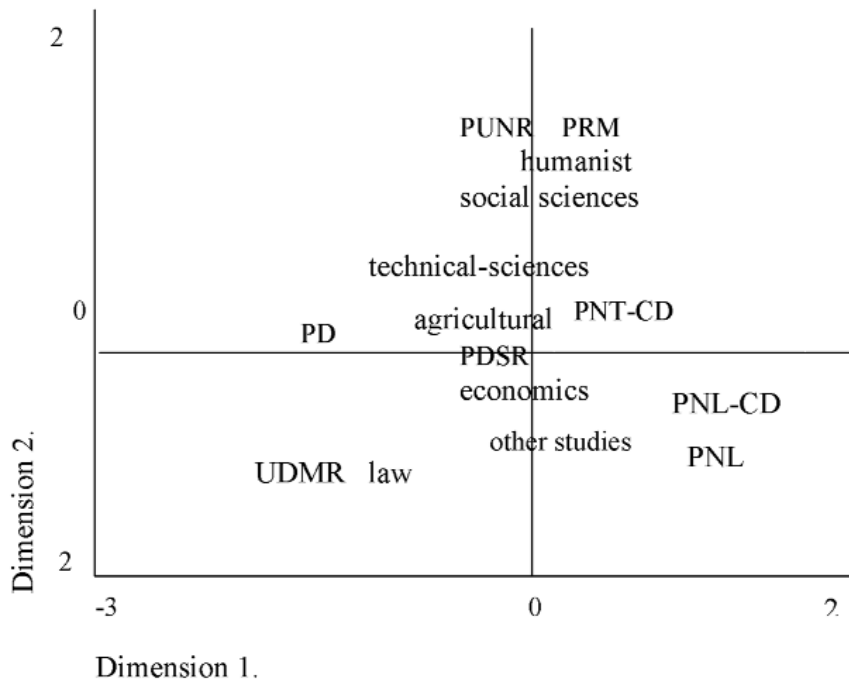


The analysis of the diagram indicates several division lines of the Romanian political elite field. First of all, the group UDMR and PUNR stands out – their main characteristic is regionalization. The majority of the MPs of these two parties come from Transylvania, graduated in Cluj, and socialized in the much disputed for “Babes-Bolyai” University. An important part of their rhetoric, which situates them together within the field despite their logical opposition of interests, and apart from the rest of the parties, is based on the legitimacy claims over this higher education institution and the associated issues of contention: the right to (higher) education in minority languages, the status and use of the Hungarian language in the public space.

The diagram reveals an affinity between the PD and PDSR MPs – socialized in common institutions, coming from common geographic-cultural areas (Bucharest), in opposition with PNT-CD for example, whose MPs had studied in all four main university centers and who, before accepting this public position, worked rather in other localities than the capital.

The analysis of the following diagram, where the categories of age and study profile were introduced, reveals moreover the similarity between the PD and PDSR MPs. The heterogeneity of the power group of MPs is once again noticeable: UDMR and PNL are represented by young persons, with legal studies as dominant specialization, PD has a significant proportion of economists, while PNT-CD has no single representative educated in law or economics. The power appears non-integrated in terms of age as well, variable associated, as was indicated above, with the studies and the habitus.

Diagram 2. The Romanian political elite. Homogeneity analysis for variables “party”, “age”, “type of studies”).



All these indicate that, despite a certain process of “professionalization” of the political class (symptomatic in the simple survival within the political field and the public function of an important part of the political elite emerged after the first democratic elections in 1990) and in spite of the continuous homogenization (at least with respect to several variables such as age), the elite that ruled Romania during these 10 years was relatively fragmented and non-integrated.

Another explanation for the lack of efficiency of the Romanian political elite of the 1996-2000 legislature could be found if the various types of networks established among its members and the structures thereby formed are examined.⁹³ According to my exploratory but incomplete network analysis,⁹⁴ based on four types of networks, the inefficiency of the legislative process may be attributed also to the lack of coherence between the configurations of groups determined by the respective types of relations (ties) among the actors. That is, the structures determined by the networks defined by the four types of ties are contradictory, placing in same groups of structural equivalence, according to one type of ties, actors that find themselves in opposing groups according to another type of ties.⁹⁵ This situation was likely to affect the activity of the legislators (at least) in terms of objectivity, independence and length of law-making process.

93 Kinship (spouse, sibling, parent, son, godfather), economic interest (e.g. common membership of the person or his kin in the administration council of same firm), political interest (e.g. membership in same party), common personal interest in a matter of societal importance (e.g. ex-owner of a nationalized house).

94 Culic, “Elita politica”, pp. 117-153.

95 E.g. In what concerns the law of nationalized houses, in 2000 42 MPs of the parties in power (16%) and 58 MPs of the opposition (26%) lived in nationalized houses, according to the president of the Association of Property Owners with Confiscated Real Estate.