Mapping Policy Preferences of Romanian Political Parties

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INTRODUCTION

The events of 1989 represented the starting point for a new type of politics in all former communist countries from the Central and Eastern Europe. From closed political systems, characterized by the total monopoly of power by the communist elite, the new democracies from the region suddenly shifted to competitive political systems, meant as the abandon of Marxist-Leninist ideological monopoly, the organization of free and competitive elections in which autonomous and rival political parties competed for the public offices and for the pursuit of particular goals. Since 1989, the political parties have become, in whole Eastern Europe, the principal actors involved in two separate but interconnected processes, that is the representation of the electorate and the competition for political power, although the second one seems to be true only for the former satellite countries rather than for former Soviet republics, where the political parties remain feeble political actors, engaged merely in representation process and less in competition for executive power.

Soon after the end of the non-democratic regimes in Eastern and Central Europe, a fairly number of studies have emphasized the importance of the nature of party competition in the new emerging democracies for the democratic future of those countries. They have realized that the emergence of new political parties and free elections are not effective guarantees for democratic survival of the new democracies and the type(s) of party competition should represent an important issue for the quality of democracy (for such argumentation, see Kitschelt et al, 1999). Specifically, it is important to determine whether parties are involved into programmatic competition for votes, i.e. they are emphasizing a set of collective goods (policy preferences), or they tend to tempt voter through other routes (clientelistic linkages or charismatic appeals).

In spite of different ways political parties appeal to voters in order to obtain votes, the party competition in any political system involves a certain degree of convergence or divergence upon the policy preferences of the political parties. Even parties which are involved in clientelistic linkages with voters or those who rely on charismatic leaders, propose, to a certain limit, policy programs, although their programmatic positions on important dimensions are blurred for the political competitors and for the electorate. Simplifying the complex nature of politics, it is usually said that party competition involves two important dimensions: the electoral

competition and, the second dimension, the parliamentary competition among parties. The first dimension of party competition encompasses the struggle of political parties to capture the support of electorate and to collect as many votes as possible in order to obtain governmental offices or to maximize the parliamentary representation of the party. Conversely, the second dimension involves the electorate acting only as an indirect actor. If the electoral period is characterized by the adaptation of parties' public discourse to the preferences of electorate, during the parliamentary competition political parties try to anticipate the preferences of the electorate and to promote those actions that are expected to win votes in the next elections.

However, this swift description of nature of party competition might let someone with the misleading impression that political parties adapt all the time their public discourses to match with the preferences of the electorate. The ideological constrains and long-term interests usually represent barriers to the adaptability of the public discourse of the political parties. In order to maintain the credibility of their public discourses, political parties have to keep a certain degree of consistency among the present policy preferences and former policy positions they proposed in the past elections. Although political parties are not anchored in fixed positions on the dimensions of party competition and they tend to move within specific policy space, they can not pass beyond this policy space without the risk of loosing their political credibility (see James Adams, 2001). Moreover, ideology represents an identity mark of each political party, and although the level of ideological intensity differs from case to case, usually political parties try to emphasis what makes them different from the other political parties in order to individualize them from other competitors.

From these points of view, this research proposal questions about the nature of party competition in Romania and the policy positions of Romanian political parties. The purposes of this paper are twofold. The first one is to give an exploratory outlook about the policy positions emphasized by the Romanian political parties in the political competition. The second aim is to evaluate whether the competition among Romanian political parties tends to take programmatic form, and, for this goal, several specific hypotheses guide the research about the party competition in Romania.

There are several underlying hypotheses about party competition in Romania. From institutional point of view, Romania is a semi-presidential system, with a proportional electoral system. While a proportional electoral system clearly favors a programmatic competition (due to the fact that members of the same political parties

do not compete directly one against the other in elections, and thus are encouraged to develop a common set of political values), the semi-presidential framework supports to a lesser extent such type of party competition, however more than the pure-presidential systems[1]. Thus, the institutional framework would suggest a favorable trend for programmatic competition in postcommunist Romania. But, in the same time, the communist and past legacies restrain the possibilities of developing a party competition in Romania, in such a short period of time, and they are still influencing the society as a whole and the specially the Romanian party system (see Kitschelt et al: 1999). However, it is reasonable to believe that legacies are becoming less and less important with the time passing, and institutional factors influence to greater extent the features of party competition. Thus:

H1: Due to the effects of institutional design and of the past legacies, the party competition in Romania should be moderating programmatic.

Another important issue of party competition is the *issue saliency*. If competition develops through programmatic appeals, then some issues would presumably be much more important for the party contest than others. By now, there is a common belief in the party literature that political parties tend to emphasize some issues in the detriment of the others (Laver and Hunt, 1992). Kitschelt et al. argued that party competition in countries with patrimonial-communist past developed on more dimensions than in the countries emerging from national-accommodative communism or bureaucratic-authoritarian communism, and the most important dimensions for the competition in these countries (Bulgaria in Kitschelt's research, but also Romania or Albania) were the cultural dimensions. However, if the hypothesis 1 is true, then the number of important dimensions should be rather low, considering that parties can not have coherent programmatic appeals on many dimensions.

H2: The competition develops on several dimensions and socio-cultural issues are the most important for the point of view of party competition.

If parties construct programmatic appeals around these important issues, then they should try to individualize their positions and, thus, a great polarization between

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[1] There have been many debates in the literature about the effects of institutional framework on political parties. For sunch example, see Juan Linz: 1994 and Matthew Soberg Shugart: 1995

the extreme parties should occur. In our case, if the programmatic competition is moderate, then also a moderate polarization should be present on the most important dimensions.

H3: A moderate polarization should occur on the salient dimensions of party competition, and this polarization should be greater than the one which appears on the non-salient dimension.

Thus, during the period between November 2002 and March 2003, several country experts, selected between the Romanian academia who teach or have written on the different topics of political parties, have been contacted and asked to evaluate the positions of Romanian political parties on thirteen specific issue dimensions and four classical issues. Out of almost forty Romanian scholars, we got back nineteen questionnaires, which permitted us to continue our endeavor. Many of the scholars refused to participate because they were overdue with their jobs, some of them did not feel themselves as being "experts" in this subject, and few argued either that they were uninterested on the topic, or that they do not think the research design was "scientific enough", although they had seen only the questionnaire and did not bother to obtain other information. Nevertheless, we are extremely grateful and we want to thank to those anonymous evaluators who accepted to comply with our research.

THE THEORETICAL DEBATES

The literature that deals with the role of policy in party competition has grown rapidly in the last forty years, starting with the seminal works of Harold Hotelling (Hotelling: 1929) and Anthony Downs (Downs: 1957), which are considered to be the main sources of spatial party competition. Downs presents a strategy of political parties in two-party system (treating them as rational actors), and who exhibit the ability of ranking their preferences. In this respect, the iron rule of Downsian theory, which is borrowed from rational choice theory and economic competition, is that parties always choose the highest ordered preference. The major argument of Downsian theory concerning political parties is movement of these actors to the median position in order to maximize their utility (or votes). The left wing party as well as the right-wing party has to move as close as possible to the median point of the dimension if they want to capture the largest share of votes. This median point has

the special property of being preferred by the most part of electorate and in this property we find its particular appeal for political parties.

The argument of Anthony Downs is mainly deductive and it is not an empirical-driven theory. However, the Downsian theory is not extremely useful when we deal with party systems that do not display two-party format. Having more than two relevant parties, the position of median voter losses its property of being preferred by all parties. In fact, more parties we add in a system, the less preferred is this position by other parties in terms of votes it provides. Also, another criticism concerns its assumption that political parties are located on only one relevant dimension for party competition. Yet, if the number of relevant dimensions increases, political parties will encounter significant difficulties in occupying the median position.

It is also the foundation theory of spatial representation which has been refined and has become pervasive only in the last decades in the bulk of party politics literature. The spatial representation of policy and political parties has been considerably moderated by the seminal work of Laver and Hunt (Laver and Hunt, 1992). The authors initiated a large-scale survey among political experts in twenty-five political democracies: Western Europe, Canada, USA, Australia, New Zealand, Japan and Israel. The experts were asked to locate the policy positions of both the leaders and the voters in their countries at a particular point on several policy scales (see Laver and Hunt, pg. 39). The research contains a lot of useful data concerning the party competition in these twenty-five democracies and represents a good instrument for comparative approach.

One interesting finding of the authors was the fact that different parties seem to have divergent views concerning the relative importance of the main ideological dimensions that structure the public debate. Also, Laver and Hunt did not find clear evidence against the hypothesis of policy-oriented electoral behavior. Another striking evidence, according to experts' judgments, is a trade-off between policy payoffs and office payoffs in almost all countries. The countries in which the policy payoffs appeared to be relatively more important were Scandinavian countries, Netherlands and Germany, while office payoffs seemed to be more important in Greece, Italy, Japan, Israel, Austria, and France.

However, the most respectable research about policy preferences of political parties is represented by the Comparative Manifestos Project. It is in fact a large-scale project of coding the electoral manifestos of mainly, but not only, Western political

parties, and it is by now the source used the most by the students of policy and party politics. This approach reflects the tradition of what several authors called *saliency theory of partycompetition* (see Budge et all, 1987; Klingemann et all, 1994; van der Brug 1999), which sustains that parties tend to avoid direct confrontation on matters about they disagree. Instead, they tend to emphasize issues on which they consider they have a good reputation and they avoid other topics (see van der Brug, pg. 150). Thus, different emphasis of political parties on issues reflects in fact the priority a certain party wants to dedicate to this particular policy issue.

As we may see, the approaches of measuring the policy positions of political parties have taken into consideration mainly the Western European party systems. In this respect, less attention has been paid to policy preferences of East European political parties although the democratization process is deeply affected by the way political parties act and by what policies they implement. The major exception is the scholarly work of Herbert Kitschelt (see Kitschelt et all, 1999) in which the authors analyze the formation, cooperation and competition of political parties in four incipient democracies, namely Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Hungary and Poland. They research is organized also around the theory of issue saliency and they found that three major dimensions, socio-economic dimension, cultural dimension and left-right dimension, particularly affect the party competition.

Some conclusions of this research are important from our perspective. The major finding of this research was that parties from Czech Republic, Poland and Hungary tend to enter in a programmatic competition much more than those from Bulgaria, for instance, although salient issues for party competition vary from country to country. This characteristic of party competition was mainly influenced by the different natures of communist regimes of these countries. As well, the authors sustain that party competition takes place within a low-dimensionality space and the most salient competitive dimensions are rather similar to those in Western democracies (see Kitschelt et all, pg. 402). Another interesting finding is the special combination between economic market liberalism with socio-cultural libertarian individualism at one pole and the social protectionism and traditional collectivism at the other pole. Overall, the authors sustain that parties compete according to intelligible patterns of action, chosen by the elite leaders and by the voters.

CENTRALIZATION AND POLICY ORIENTATION ATTITUDE OF ROMANIAN POLITICAL PARTIES

At the beginning of the questionnaire, we have addressed to our experts two questions about how centralized, for each party separately, the decision making process is and how willing are the parliamentary parties to trade off policies in order to be allowed obtain governmental offices. Aside from the explorative interest about how centralized and how ideologically "orthodox" are the Romanian political parties, the initial hypothesis suggested that parties with higher level of centralization of decision making are more likely to develop programmatic appeals while parties with low level of centralization would tend to use non-programmatic means to attract votes. Also, taking into account the willingness of parties to trade-off public policies in order to obtain public offices, we estimated that parties with low interest in such bargaining process would be more inclined to formulate coherent policy programs, because they are not very constrained to adapt their electoral messages, while parties with high scores on policy-for-offices exchange would have few chances to develop programmatic appeals.

Nonetheless, the issue of programmatic competition is much more complex than it is developed above. However, taking into account some preliminary indicators, we could have a clue about the possibility of some parties to elaborate programmatic appeals and coherent and complex policy programs. Therefore, if our estimations are correct, political parties with high centralization of decision making process and low interest in trading policies for offices should be much more able to develop more consistent programs.

In our questionnaire, we asked our experts to place all parliamentary parties on a five points scale, going from one to five, where 1 represented low level of centralization of decision making, and five high level of centralization. Therefore, higher an individual score for party A, for instance, the higher centralization of decision making process was considered to be, in that case, by the expert. Table 1 reports the results of experts' evaluations of centralization of parliamentary Romanian parties. As we can see, the main finding is that experts see Romanian political parties rather as centralized political entities, where political decisions are taking by the center of political parties, namely the parliamentary group, party elites and party activists.

Fig. 1: Political parties and centralization of decision making

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Centralization of decision making: PSD	19	3,89	,81
Centralization of decision making: PRM	19	4,68	,95
Centralization of decision making: PD	19	3,84	,83
Centralization of decision making: PNL	19	3,37	,60
Centralization of decision making: UDMR	18	3,17	,92
Centralization of decision making: PUR	16	4,31	,79
Valid N (listwise)	15		

The most centralized political party seems to be, at least in experts' view, Great Romania Party (PRM), who obtained the highest score (4,68), followed by Romanian Humanitarian Party (PUR), with a score of 4,31. At the other side of the scale, we have, maybe not surprisingly, UDMR, who is seen as the least centralized party. If in the case of PRM, the nature of its leadership, based on leader charisma and low institutionalization of the party, probably determined experts see this party as most centralized party, in case of UDMR the score is probably explained by the nature of this political alliance, as well as by the factions who struggle for power within the party.

On the other hand, when dealing with results, we found the highest standard deviation values exactly in the case of extreme parties in term of centralization of decision making, suggesting little agreement among our experts about the level of centralization of PRM and UDMR. Possibly, the experts took into consideration, when judging the concentration or dissemination of power within the parties, not only the level of decision-making but also the level of dissent existing within the parties.

In what concerns the attitudes of political parties toward the public policies they propose, we asked the Romanian experts to rate, on a five points scale, how much willing the parliamentary parties are to trade the favourite policy positions in exchange of governmental offices. On the scale, 1 was considered to be the point indicating that parties are very reluctant to trade policies for offices, while 5 was the point where political parties were considered to be very open to enter in such

bargaining process. In the same time, this question was regarded as a very useful tool to assess the ideological strength of the Romanian parties. Our assumption was that while parties with resolute ideologies (doctrines) should have no tendency to exchange policy positions for governmental offices, political parties with loose ideological commitments should be more willing to enter in such bargaining process.

Table 2 shows the willingness of Romanian parliamentary parties to trade policies for places in government. As we can see from the below table, the political experts consider that PRM and PSD are the most unwilling political parties to give up preferred policy positions in order to gain access to governmental resources, while UDMR and PUR are seen as parties with loose ideological intensity. If in the case of UDMR the explanation would be the fact that it is an ethnic coalition of parties, and usually ethnic parties have no intense ideology, in what concerns PUR, its self-assuming social liberal orientation and the coalition with Social Democrats made to be considered as rather interested party in such trade off.

Table 2: Romanian parties and the trade off between policies and offices

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Willingness to trade policies for officies: PSD	18	2,61	,92
Willingness to trade policies for officies: PRM	18	2,56	1,29
Willingness to trade policies for officies: PD	18	2,89	,90
Willingness to trade policies for officies: PNL	18	2,72	,75
Willingness to trade policies for officies: UDMR	19	3,11	1,10
Willingness to trade policies for officies: PUR	16	3,75	1,06
Valid N (listwise)	16		

Another interesting finding is that the standard deviation values are perceivable higher on this dimension than they were on the previous one, suggesting that experts encountered problems identifying the preferred points of political parties. In this regard, PNL seems to be the party with the clearest position about the policy-offices trade off, having the lowest SD. At the opposite side is PRM, which, although it received the lowest mean (2,56), it has also the highest SD, showing little agreement

among experts when they rated this party, probably because of the split between the party leader, who fiercely opposed PSD, and its parliamentary group and high party activists who favors a closer collaboration with the largest parliamentary party.

Obviously, such division within the party is in the position to affect experts' judgements, and the magnitude of SD in this case is the result of such centrifugal actions of the party elite.

Finally, we have to emphasize another important aspect regarding the issue of ideological orthodoxy: the regression to the mean of the mean values. Otherwise said, all of the mean values are concentrated, in this case, to the mean of the scale, suggesting that none of the Romanian political parties is either ideologically dogmatic, or extremely loose in terms of doctrine. However, in this case, we have to regard extremely cautiously such finding because, while it may suggest the concentration of the parties around the mean, it may also indicate disagreement among experts about the position of parties. What I try to say is that statistical technique might distort the sense of mean values if, in the same time, we do not take into consideration the SD values.

DIMENSIONS OF PARTY DIVIDES: ISSUE SALIENCY

How many dimensions of party competition and how salient they are, there are probably the most important issues to be determined when dealing with the competition among parties. Most preferred in terms of research design would have been a survey applied to the party elite and party activists in order to determine what issues are seen important for party competition from the perspective of political parties (see Kitschelt et al., 1999). However, given the intellectual refinement and deep knowledge about Romanian politics, we assess that the reliability of experts' estimations is quite high, and moreover, since now, it is the best source we have in terms of possible dimensions of party competition.

Here we are coming to what is probably the most important lack of our research endeavour. Since we are only in the possession of expert evaluations, we are not in the position to assess how and if these divisions of party system are transformed in dimensions of party competition. What we lack most is a mass survey data where electorate is asked to rate the saliency of the same issues as ours, to place political

parties on these dimensions and then to place themselves on the same issues. These three needs should be accompanied by the way voters voted in the last election. Using these sets of data is a minimal requirement in order to speak confidently about the dimensions of party competition.

Since a political issue is transformed in competitive dimension only if voter behavior is determined by the own position and position of political parties on that issue, at the moment being we can speak only about possible dimensions of party competition, or, simpler said, about party system divides. Thus, other researches, based on population surveys, have to decide whether or not our political divides are or will be transformed in competitive dimensions; in what concerns the present research we are just beginning to explore this untouched field of Romanian politics.

In our questionnaire we asked our experts to rate the saliency of thirteen political issues, considered by us, on a priori grounds, to be the most important ones, relying on the pre-existing knowledge about the Romanian politics and on the results of other studies from Western and Eastern Europe (see Laver and Hunt: 1992, Kistchelt et. Al: 1999). Two major difficulties came when we selected the issues. First, we had to choose between including issues important for the present day politics in Romania (changing constitutional norms, for instance), and thus, to include a huge number of issues, important but with fewer chances to be salient for longer period of time, or to concentrate on issues that might constitute dimensions of competition and possible cleavages in the near future. Although we had been tempted to include at least some issues from the first group, we finally decided to rely merely on the potentially persistent dimensions/divides.

The second difficulty arose when we reached the problem of issues with valence competition potential. Usually, the valence competition is the one not between different, conflicting political position regarding that issue, but about the question of who should implement such policies. In other words, all important political actors agree that such policy should be implemented but they disagree about whom is in the right position to implement it. We estimated that, in Romanian case, such kinds of issues are the one related to the European integration, for instance, and this is the reason why we did not include them in our questionnaire. While all Romanian parties generally agree on European and NATO integration, the main dispute is about whom is going to accomplish such goal. Therefore, we considered that such issues, while important for political parties and for party competition, are not

useful for our main purpose: to determine whether or not Romanian political parties use programmatic appeals to attract votes.

Again, in order to estimate the saliency of the issues for party competition, we asked Romanian experts to rate them on the scale ranging from one to five, where five represented very high saliency for party competition. Table 3 reports the means and standard deviations for all thirteen political issues.

Table 3: Issue saliency

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Importance of social and health insurance	18	2,83	1,10
Importance of foreign vs. domestic capital	18	2,94	1,11
Importance of privatization of state enterprises	18	**3,72**	1,07
Importance of promoting foreign investments	18	**3,28**	1,07
Importance of controling inflation vs. unemployment	17	**3,29**	,77
Importance of environment protection	18	1,39	,78
Importance of income taxation	17	**3,88**	,93
Importance of promoting minority rights	19	**3,26**	1,10
Importance of regionalization issue	19	2,53	1,02
Importance of promoting rural vs. urban development	18	1,61	,70
Importance of the Orthodox Church status	18	1,83	,86
Importance of the income redistribution among judete	18	2,56	1,10
Importance of the liberty vs. morality of mass-media	18	2,83	,71
Valid N (listwise)	16		

The most noticeable result concerns the relative reduced number of salient issues, only five out of thirteen issues scoring a saliency higher than 3.00, the mid-point of the scale. Even more interesting is the fact that none of the proposed issues scored above 4, which is the value corresponding to very high saliency level.

In what concerns the most salient issues, the experts rated income taxation and privatization of the state enterprises as being the most important divides for party system. In the table 3, it can be seen, in bold, the most salient issues (those who

obtained a mean of above 3). The other three salient dimensions are quite close each other in terms of mean values: controlling inflation or unemployment (3,29), promotion of foreign investments (3,28) and promotion of minority rights (3,26). Surprisingly, the status of Orthodox Church, environmental protection and fighting the differences between rural and urban areas scored very low values, meaning a very low saliency for party competition. Also, redistribution of revenues among counties and the issue of regionalization scored lower values than we were expecting, although much higher than the group with lowest scores. One explanation, at least in the case of regionalization, would be that we had sent the questionnaire before this issue came into public debate and experts, based on the previous experience, underscored it.

There is also a fourth group, who comes close to the threshold but still beneath it. It is the one formed by social and health insurance issue, promoting foreign or domestic capital, and what we called "liberty vs. morality of mass media" issue. We would have expected that at least social and health insurance have a higher saliency for party competition in Romania, given the particularities of the social security systems. However, the evaluation of experts places this dimension close to the mean of the scale, but under it, which rates its importance for party competition as beneath the medium saliency.

PARTY POSITIONS AND POLITICAL DIVIDES

In the second part, we are going to look closer to party distributions on our policy scales whose saliency was evaluated in the previous section. Although our endeavour is to determine whether or not Romanian political parties formulates programmatic appeals to win votes, the main purpose of this section is to give an exploratory view about the policy positions of Romanian parties.

1. Social and health insurance

Due to the un-development of the Romanian society, aggravated by the communist system heritage, the problem related with social and health insurance is a very problematic one. At the very moment, in Romania, the total number of employed people in Romania is of approximately 4 millions. The ration between state pensioners and employees is 1.06 (PWR, May 2003, p5) meaning that every

employed has to support more than one pensioner. This ration makes the public social and health insurance system to be stretched to its maximum limits, many independent economic analysts warning that the entire system could collapse. However, the experts evaluated the saliency of this dimension as being below medium rate, which suggests that parties did not formulated strong public appeals on this issue. Table 4 presents the distribution of political parties on this dimension.

Table 4: Distribution of parties on on social and helth insurance dimension

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Social and health insurence: PSD	17	3,53	4,54
Social and health insurence: PRM	16	3,94	5,21
Social and health insurance: PD	17	8,35	3,69
Social and health insurance: PNL	17	12,76	4,96
Social and health insurance: UDMR	15	10,80	4,20
Social and health insurance: PUR	13	8,46	4,45
Valid N (listwise)	13		

This saliency value of this dimension (2,83) corresponds to the importance for the political parties, and is consistent with Downsian theory that parties tend to avoid the most contradictory issues. Regarding the individual parties, there are not spectacular results in what concerns their most preferred positions on this dimension. PSD and PRM are ranked with 3.53 and 3.94 points, very close to the socialist ideological ideal (the point 1 mean full support for obligatory participation of citizens to public insurance systems, while 20 is full support for freedom of choosing a private or public system). PUR, PD and UDMR are grouped in the middle of the scale, with 8.46, 8.35 and 10.8 points. The only Romanian party that is placed closer to the right end of the scale is PNL, with 12.76 points. We can observed the discrepancy among the name of PNL, it political program and its policy position on this issue. The interpretation of this result is that in the conditions of a society where most of the electorate vote for leftist parties, the possibility to survive with a clear rightist

position, especially on this dimension, is very low, and, thus, PNL has been obliged to adapt its discourse.

Another interesting finding regards the high standard deviations of political parties on this issue, suggesting that although this question could have been potentially salient for party competition, Romanian political parties did not formulate clear political messages about the reformation of the social insurance and health systems. All SDs values of the political parties are much higher than the critical threshold of 3.00, with only PD approaching this value, but still far away of it.

2. Promoting foreign capital vs. domestic capital

The second issue addressed to expert evaluations regarded what type of capital (foreign or domestic one) should be promoted in Romania. Usually, this issue gives us an image about economic nationalism of the Romanian political parties and, in the same time, about how open the national economy should be. Of course, political parties tend to emphasis, usually from electoral reasons, the importance of both categories for economic development. However, the scarcity and limitation of resources regularly ask for a strategic decision from the government and parties in power, in one or another direction.

Therefore, we asked the experts to place the parliamentary parties on this scale, where 1 meant that parties favour the encouragement of foreign capital and 20 was the point where parties were strongly in favour of promotion of domestic capital. Table 5 shows the distribution of political parties on promotion of foreign vs. domestic capitalism scale.

Table 5: Promoting foreing or domestic capital

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Promoting foreign vs. domestic capital: PSD	17	14,06	2,25
Promoting foreign vs. domestic capital: PRM	17	18,59	1,94
Promoting foreign vs. domestic capital: PD	17	9,82	1,78
Promoting foreign vs. domestic capital: PNL	17	7,71	3,75
Promoting foreign vs. domestic capital: UDMR	16	7,00	3,35
Promoting foreign vs. domestic capital: PUR	14	15,43	3,37
Valid N (listwise)	13		

As we have shown in the previous section, the Romanian experts have ranked this issue with 2.94 points, higher than other problems but not as high as the most important ones. As expected, PSD and PUR are very closely ranked on the 20 points scale, with 14.06 and 15.43 points. Many of the domestic Romanian investors are members of PSD, who financially sustain or have sustained in the past this party. In the case of tinny PUR, its president is one of the most important Romanian businessmen. PRM the most nationalist parties, is very close to the end part of the scale with 18.59 points. PD is placed in the middle of the scale, with 9.82 points, and has the lowest standard deviation on this issue (1.78). In the right part of the scale we find PNL and UDMR, with 7.71 and 7 points, but both with high SD, 3.75 and 3.35. PNL is placed closer to the right end of the scale than UDMR, a position in accord with its liberal doctrine but not consistent with the long tradition of the party who emphasized the needs of development of domestic capitalists.

The interesting point is that experts generally tend to agree about the positions of parties who favor national capital (with the exception of PUR, all other parties have low SDs), while there is some disagreements about the real place of UDMR and PNL. However, on aggregate level, this dimension scored lower SD than the previous issue.

3. Privatization of the state enterprise

The issue of privatization the state enterprises is placed second in order of importance, with 3.72 points on the issue saliency scale. Being one of the most important problems for the post-communist Romanian transition, the privatization of

the state enterprises has maintained itself for a long period of time in the centre of public and political debate. Taking into the consideration the past experience, there have been, concerning the privatization issue, two distinct blocks: one determined in favour of privatizing the state sector, formed by PNL, PD and UDMR, on one side, and PSD with PRM on the other side. However, the combined pressure of the internal needed reforms, social problems and the international monetary institutions, should have determined a general shift in favour of diminishing the state economic sector. Table 6 reveals the placement of political parties on this issue, as seen by the Romanian experts, where scores close to point 1 means strongly in favour of total privatization of state sector, and those close to point 20 represent parties in favour of important state sector, with enterprises receiving state funds for development and sustainability.

Table 6: Privatization of state enterprizes

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Privatization of state enterprises: PSD	17	14,06	4,08
Privatization of state enterprises: PRM	17	18,12	2,69
Privatization of state enterprises: PD	17	9,59	3,14
Privatization of state enterprises: PNL	17	3,88	3,33
Privatization of state enterprises: UDMR	16	5,69	3,48
Privatization of state enterprises: PUR	14	10,86	4,29
Valid N (listwise)	13		

Analyzing the party placements on the twenty points scale, it can be observed that the experts' opinions are largely correspondent with what the parties transmitted through their public political discourse. PRM and PSD are strongly in favor of an important state sector in economy. In the case of PRM, its SD is very low, comparing with the one of PSD (4.08), showing that PRM has a better programmatic position on this issue.

In the right part of the scale, as expected, we find PNL and UDMR, PNL being the closest to the option of a fast and total privatization. What surprises to PNL

is a rather high SD (SD = 3,33), on a dimension that was expected to be very salient for Liberals. Also, such centrifugal tendency can be seen in case of PSD, which has a large SD on this dimension, much higher than one expected from a social democrat party.

4. Welcome of foreign capital

In a sense, this issue is linked to the previous one and with the issue of domestic vs. foreign capital, but is seen by our experts less salient than privatization. While it points to an important economic problem, it was initially meant to measure merely the nationalistic attitude of parties. Table 7 presents the result of party distribution on this issue.

Table 7: Welcome for foreign investments

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Welcome for foreign capital: PSD	18	9,33	3,53
Welcome for foreign capital: PRM	18	2,61	4,79
Welcome for foreign capital: PD	18	12,44	4,69
Welcome for foreign capital: PNL	18	15,56	4,83
Welcome for foreign capital: UDMR	16	15,69	4,91
Welcome for foreign capital: PUR	14	8,79	4,77
Valid N (listwise)	14		

With all that in the present time, virtually no party, excepting partially PRM, is against the foreign capital, the competitions of the foreign capital to the domestic investors make this issue a sensitive one. Ranked with 3.28 the problem of welcoming the foreign capital is viewed as medium to high saliency. When we analyze the positions of political parties, we can observe that the party placements are less polarized than expected. Excepting PRM, who is a clear outlier with its mean of 2.6, the positions of parties vary their position between 8.79 and 15.

Surprising is the score of PUR who is seen by the experts as a party even more against foreign investments than actually PSD is. However, taking into consideration

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that the standard deviations of political parties are quite large on this dimension, we could hardly speak about clear policy positions about this issue.

5. Controlling inflation vs. unemployment

The third problem in the order of importance on issue saliency scale is the classical economical and social scholar debate about fighting inflation vs. unemployment. While a common problem in macroeconomics, the relationship between inflation and unemployment has remained blurred for most of the political scientists, since many of our experts objected that parties never addressed such messages to their voters. This objection is, at least partially, correct: Romanian parties never emphasized, in their messages, the effects of fighting inflation over the unemployment and viceversa. However, it is a common law in macroeconomics that fighting unemployment will increase inflation, and fighting inflation would produce an augmentation of unemployment rate.

As most of the other economical problems, the control of inflation vs. unemployment issue is ranked with a relatively high importance, compared with the other dimensions. However, because of different ideological orientation of political parties, we would have expected this issue to have a higher saliency.

Table 8 presents the results of descriptive statistics concerning this issue. We have asked the experts to place the parliamentary parties on a 20-point scale, where 1 meant the point where party is totally engaged in fighting inflation, and 20 represented the point where the primary goal of the political party was to fight unemployment.

Table 8: Positions of Romanian political parties on fighting inflation or unemployment

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Controlling inflation vs. unemployment: PSD	18	12,83	3,78
Controlling inflation vs. unemployment: PRM	16	16,75	2,89
Controlling inflation vs. unemployment: PD	17	8,76	4,12
Controlling inflation vs. unemployment: PNL	18	5,00	3,46
Controlling inflation vs. unemployment: UDMR	15	6,87	3,09
Controlling inflation vs. unemployment: PUR	12	10,00	4,90
Valid N (listwise)	12		

The party ranked closest to the fighting unemployment end is PRM (16.75). PSD, a party that has always preferred to promote policies that could reduce or maintain the unemployment at acceptable social levels, is ranked with 12.83 points, closer to the center of the scale that normally someone would have been expected. The Romanian post-communist socio- economic history has shown that none of these factors could have been in fact fully controlled. Thus, the position of the party that is the most influent on the actual situation is ranked more depending on the results, and less on its programmatic engagements. On the other side of the coin, PUR is the party with the most undefined identity, its score being exactly 10,00, but with a SD that equals 4.9, an indicator that even the policy experts did not manage to locate PUR undoubtedly on the political space.

Somehow surprisingly, all the other parties are placed under the middle of the scale. Although all these three parties had governed during the period with highest inflation in post-communist period, they were seen by our experts as preferring to fight inflation. In this case, it seems that the identification on the scale is largely determined by their programmatic intentions. However, we have, again, rather large SDs, excepting PRM and, surprisingly, UDMR, which approach our estimated threshold. Thus, this suggests that it would be rather implausible to speak about a programmatic competition on this dimension.

6. Protection of the environment

Being a dimension that belongs more to the post-modernist class of issues, the protection of the environment was ranked by the experts as the issue with the lowest saliency. One important feature of this issue is the mean of the party means, which is the most deviated toward one of the ends of the scales with 13.67, toward a priority for economic development, without taking into consideration the environment protection. As most of the parties favor a development of the industrial sector, even with the costs of affecting the environment, and the saliency of this dimension for party competition is very low, this issue has only few chances to mould the party competition, at least for the near future.

Table 9: Environmental policies and party competition

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Protection of the environment: PSD	16	15,06	2,54
Protection of the environment: PRM	15	14,47	3,76
Protection of the environment: PD	16	13,44	2,97
Protection of the environment: PNL	16	14,06	4,07
Protection of the environment: UDMR	15	11,73	4,17
Protection of the environment: PUR	13	13,31	3,01
Valid N (listwise)	12		

7. Income taxation

Almost in every party system, the problem of income taxation is a very sensitive one. The actual taxing system puts most of the fiscal burden on the new emerging middle class. Because the poorest persons are usually very low taxed, and in the case of the reach one, the incomes are not generated through wages, collecting the taxes is perhaps the most important issue in nowadays Romania. When asking our experts to rate the saliency of this issue for party competition in Romania, we found out that this dimension scored the highest value. Our surprise was determined not so much by the saliency of this dimension in itself, but when comparing with the saliency of other issues, like social and health insurance or privatization of state sectors.

Table 10 presents the means and standard deviations of Romanian political parties on this issue.

Table 10: Income taxation and party competition

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Income taxation: PSD	18	15,56	4,10
Income taxation: PRM	16	16,31	5,33
Income taxation: PD	18	11,78	3,37
Income taxation: PNL	18	9,17	4,91
Income taxation: UDMR	17	9,82	3,30
Income taxation: PUR	13	9,85	2,94
Valid N (listwise)	12		

As expected, PSD and PRM are seen as parties favoring a progressive taxation of income (as percentage levels), although there is some disagreement between the experts regarding PRM as the standard deviation is very high. PD and PNL are seen on this axis rather in the middle - PD slightly towards a progressive taxation and PNL more in favor of equal income taxation for all citizens, but its position is almost near the centre of scale. Coming from a liberal party, one would have expected that its message emphasize more the need of backing-up for the middle class or owners, who desperately call for a tax burden reduction in their case. What these results suggest is that PNL is seen as quite reluctant to assume rightist position at least in what concerns this issue. However, in the case of PNL, as it also happened for PRM, the standard deviation is high, which makes it clear that the score obtained by this party on the income taxation scale should be regarded with precaution. UDMR and PUR also obtained middle scores and taking into consideration the fact that their standard deviation on this scale revolves round 3 it is reasonable to affirm that this two parties are somewhere in the centre. The difficulties encountered in establishing the positions of different parties on this scale are pointing out that the nature of party competition is rather not programmatic.

The SDs of the parties on this issue are again very large, varying from 2,94 to 5,33, indicating that the political positions of most of the Romanian political parties are not very well defined on the most important political issue. Even though the issue of income taxation was considered by the experts as the most important one for the party competition, the results show that the situation is not clear for most of the

parties. With the exception of PUR (even its SD comes close to the threshold), all the other parties do not have a clear position regarding the taxation of income.

8. Minority rights

Being a country where ethnic minorities represent a significant part of the population, and where a fairly large ethnic party exists, we have expected this dimension be much more important for party competition than actually political experts rated as being. Taking into consideration the past experience, the rise in electoral terms of the Great Romania Party, it is easily to explain why we had such expectations. This dimension has indeed a saliency above the medium (3.26), however less than one could have expected.

Table 11 shows the results of the data aggregation. As we can easily see, the dimension is extremely polarized, the extreme parties being places almost at the very ends of the scale.

Table 11: Minority rights

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Minority rights: PSD	19	11,53	3,88
Minority rights: PRM	19	19,00	1,73
Minority rights: PD	19	10,47	3,27
Minority rights: PNL	19	8,84	2,97
Minority rights: UDMR	19	1,47	2,09
Minority rights: PUR	13	11,31	4,66
Valid N (listwise)	13		

Quite normally, UDMR and, to lesser extent, PNL are the most favourable parties for special minority rights. At the opposite side, PRM comes near to the point that shows no acceptance for minority rights. Another interesting finding is that these parties have much lower SDs on this scale than parties with mean close to the centre of the scale. PRM and UDMR have, in this respect, very low standard deviations, while PNL's SD is also beneath the threshold.

On the scale concerning minorities rights the situation of PSD is rather confuse. Even though it obtained a mean located close the centre of the scale, the high standard deviation shows that PSD has not defined a clear position regarding this issue. PD and PUR are situated somewhere in the middle – but again with fairly large high standard deviation. Although the saliency of minority rights is considered

important for the party competition, it seems to be relevant primarily for the competition between PRM and UDMR, who take opposite positions on this scale.

9. Regionalization issue

The regionalization issue might be one of the dimensions with potential impact for party competition, especially in deeply divided societies, where large minority groups are compactly located in certain areas. Usually, the development of numerous party systems from Europe and as well as competition between parties are deeply affected by the regional settings. This is what has happened in the case of Belgium, Spain, Switzerland, and, even Great Britain in the last period of time. From the same reasons as in the previous case (minority rights dimension) we would have expected that such issue be quite important for party competition in Romania. As reported above, the saliency of this dimension is only 2.53. In a sense, such rather low score was determined by the timing of our research as the experts received the questionnaire before a whole set of debated to be risen by this issue.

Table 12: Regionalization issue and party positions

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Regionalization issue: PSD	18	10,72	3,68
Regionalization issue: PRM	18	18,72	1,99
Regionalization issue: PD	17	9,71	3,90
Regionalization issue: PNL	18	7,11	3,97
Regionalization issue: UDMR	17	2,06	3,01
Regionalization issue: PUR	13	10,92	4,27
Valid N (listwise)	12		

In what regards the distribution of political parties on this axis (see table 12), it is pretty much similar with the one of support/opposition to minority rights. Again UDMR and PRM are located at the extremes, while PSD, PNL, PUR and PD are placed around the centre of the scale. The main difference, however, is that the standard deviations are much larger than in the previous case. The main exception is PRM whose fierce opposition to UDMR determines it to have a clear position on this issue.

10. Fighting the rural-urban differences

As our political experts considered being in the first part of our study, the differences between rural and urban areas proved not to be an issue for party competition. Its low saliency makes it almost unimportant for party competition, although almost half of the Romanian population lives in rural areas, where living standards are extremely poor and opportunities are fewer than in the urban places. Also, as table 13 shows below, the standard deviations in the case of each party were higher than 3 in all the cases, suggesting that parties are either uninterested, or unable to formulate clear electoral messages on this dimension. That the issue is not important for the party competition is also suggested by the positions of the parties, as all them place themselves at the centre of the scale, suggesting that competition is rather of valence than of different programmatic positions.

Table 13: Fighting rural-urban differences

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Reduce the urban-rural differences: PSD	16	9,63	3,05
Reduce the urban-rural differences: PRM	15	9,53	3,34
Reduce the urban-rural differences: PD	16	11,31	3,68
Reduce the urban-rural differences: PNL	16	12,75	4,34
Reduce the urban-rural differences: UDMR	15	10,27	4,37
Reduce the urban-rural differences: PUR	13	11,54	3,53
Valid N (listwise)	12		

11. The status of Orthodox Church

On this dimension, we asked the experts to concentrate on the role of Orthodox Church, as an institution, rather than on the general influence of Christian principles in Romanian politics. Thus, experts were asked to place the political parties on this dimension taking into consideration their positions toward relationship between the state and the Orthodox Church. Table 14 shows the positions of political parties toward the special treatment of Orthodox Church by the state.

Table 14: The role of Orthodox Church

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
The status of Orthodox Church: PSD	17	5,41	3,91
The status of Orthodox Church: PRM	17	2,12	2,87
The status of Orthodox Church: PD	17	11,53	2,72
The status of Orthodox Church: PNL	17	13,71	4,12
The status of Orthodox Church: UDMR	17	18,82	1,81
The status of Orthodox Church: PUR	13	8,46	4,68
Valid N (listwise)	13		

Again, the dimension seems to be very polarized, with PRM and PSD favoring a special treatment of, and special rights for the Orthodox Church, while UDMR is the closest party to the position which emphasizes the needs to equal treatment for all the confessions. Again, the most interesting issue is PNL's position on this dimension, which inclines towards equal treatment for all religious confessions, but it is closer to the centre of the scale than one would have expected. Moreover, its SD is quite large, showing that some experts have seen this party even closer to the special treatment of point for Orthodox Church.

Concerning the standard deviation values, we should remark the relative small SD of PD, the usual small SDs of UDMR and PRM on cultural dimensions, and the large SD of PUR, a party that generally was an enigma for our evaluators.

12. Income redistribution among counties

When we decided on the issues to be included in the questionnaire, we estimated a higher saliency for this dimension, given the fact that it touches both the economic and cultural spheres. However, the experts ranked its saliency as being below the threshold (SD = 3.00), which places it into the group of issues with few chances to affect the structure of party competition. Table 15 shows the means and standard deviations of the Romanian political parties on this dimension. The low potential for programmatic competition is furthermore emphasized by the standard

deviations which are larger than our target value, excepting the one for UDMR that is slightly below it.

Table 15: Income redistribution among counties and party competition

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Income redistribution among counties: PSD	18	5,67	3,20
Income redistribution among counties: PRM	17	4,29	3,64
Income redistribution among counties: PD	17	11,41	3,06
Income redistribution among counties: PNL	17	14,41	3,50
Income redistribution among counties: UDMR	17	17,53	2,96
Income redistribution among counties: PUR	13	9,92	4,61
Valid N (listwise)	13		

13. Freedom vs. morality of mass media

One of the most discussed issues in Romanian politics is the freedom of mass media and how this freedom has to be accommodated with the need, emphasized by some parties, that mass media agents should serve some sort of "morality" and public good. Therefore, we considered that such a dimension, given the potential of conflict it bears, could be one important from the perspective of party competition. While its potential for the future can not be judged on objective bases by this research, for the moment being it is rather unlikely that parties develop a programmatic competition on this issue. Table 16 shows us the reason behind such statement.

Table 16: The role of mass media and party competition

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Freedom vs. morality of mass-media: PSD	18	5,89	3,92
Freedom vs. morality of mass-media: PRM	18	8,33	7,22
Freedom vs. morality of mass-media: PD	18	13,78	3,08
Freedom vs. morality of mass-media: PNL	18	15,61	2,73
Freedom vs. morality of mass-media: UDMR	17	15,24	2,80
Freedom vs. morality of mass-media: PUR	13	9,85	4,98
Valid N (listwise)	13		

First reason is given by the saliency of this dimension: 2.83 on a 5-point scale, as reported in the issue saliency section. Also, as it can be seen in the table 16, four parties have larger SDs than 3.00, and in this group, PRM has an incredible SD = 7.22. Most probably, the experts reasoned differently in this case because of the authoritarian and more traditional (in cultural issues as abortion, sexual minorities etc) attitudes of PRM, and the practice of *Great Romania Review* which largely benefits from the freedom of speech. The only parties that could develop programmatic appeals on this dimension are PNL and UDMR, which have smaller SDs than the rest of the parties.

CLASSICAL ISSUES OF PARTY COMPETITION

Besides the concrete issues mentioned in the previous section, we asked our experts to place the Romanian political parties on four classical dimensions of party competition: economic freedom, the role of religion in politics, attachment to national values, and the left-right dimension. We did not ask them to rate the saliency of these classical issues, because they are more abstract scale and it is assumed by the theory that such dimensions should be relevant for all polities. As in the case of all other issues, the experts were asked to locate the Romanian parties on a 20-point scale.

In the case of the issue of economic freedom vs. state interventionism interventionism (0 representing pro-interventionism, and 20 strongly in favor of free market, except for PSD and PRM, who obtained means that were less than 10, being placed in favor of interventionism, all the other four parties were located towards the 20-end of the scale, meaning that they are perceived as being pro free market (see table 17). The most in favor of free market appear to be PNL and UDMR, a situation that was to be expected given the position of these parties regarding economic reform, while the most adverse party to economic freedom was seen to be PRM. A surprising mean of 12,14 obtained PUR on this issue, far away than its ally, PSD. Still, in this respect we have to bear in mind that the standard deviation for this party was the highest one, namely 3,84.

Table 17: Positions of political parties on economic freedom

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Economic freedom: PSD	19	6,68	2,47
Economic freedom: PRM	19	2,74	3,23
Economic freedom: PD	19	12,05	2,48
Economic freedom: PNL	19	15,89	2,88
Economic freedom: UDMR	17	14,94	2,49
Economic freedom: PUR	14	12,14	3,84
Valid N (listwise)	14		

The second classical issue that was taken into consideration was the role of religion in politics. This was translated into the option for clerical traditions, located at the 0-end of the scale, and secular traditions, at the 20-end of the scale. Table 18 reports the descriptive statistics for this dimension. Except for PRM that was located in the first half of the scale, with a mean of 7, 22, meaning that it is in favor of an important role of religion in politics, all the other parties were located in the second half of the scale. In the case of this issue, standard deviations were higher than in the previous case, ranging from 2, 94 (the lowest- the case of PD) to 5, 29 (the highest – UDMR). These show that there is deep disagreement among experts on how to place the political parties on this issue. The high score obtained by UDMR appears to be surprising as well as the lowest registered by PD. Once again there is a strong correlation between this issue and that of left-right dimension in the case of PSD. Nonetheless, this issue of the role of religion in politics does not appear to be relevant for party competition in Romania.

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Table 18: Clerical vs. secular dimension

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	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Role of religion in politics: PSD	17	14,00	4,09
Role of religion in politics: PRM	18	7,22	4,62
Role of religion in politics: PD	18	15,83	2,94
Role of religion in politics: PNL	18	16,28	3,27
Role of religion in politics: UDMR	17	12,59	5,29
Role of religion in politics: PUR	14	14,14	4,40
Valid N (listwise)	14		

The third classical dimension was the attachment to national or to cosmopolitan values. Without any doubt, PRM is seen as being in favor of national values, obtaining a mean of 1.42, with a very low standard deviation of 1.95 (see table 19). This underlines the fact that the nationalistic discourse that PRM conducts is extremely relevant in defining the party itself and in its location on the scale. Two other parties were placed closer to the 0-end of the scale, namely PSD and PUR. All the other three parties obtained means higher than 10, the highest being obtained by UDMR, that was clearly located as being in favor of cosmopolitan values. Once again there is a strong correlation between this issue and the left-right dimension in the case of PSD, this being among the three predictors regarding its saliency for this party. In what regards UDMR, this has the highest correlation in what concerns the classical issues between the attachment to cosmopolitan values and its location on the left-right dimension. The highest standard deviations are registered in the case of PNL and PUR, underlining the fact that the experts place these parties differently.

Table 19: Nationalist values and party positions

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
National vs. cosmopolitan identity: PSD	19	6,63	2,87
National vs. cosmopolitan identity: PRM	19	1,42	1,95
National vs. cosmopolitan identity: PD	19	11,89	3,74
National vs. cosmopolitan identity: PNL	19	13,05	3,96
National vs. cosmopolitan identity: UDMR	18	16,28	2,74
National vs. cosmopolitan identity: PUR	14	8,64	5,05
Valid N (listwise)	14		

The left-right dimension is probably the most common used when talking about political parties and the way in which they are related to each other and their location on different issues relevant for party competition. In a sense, this represents a supra-scale that includes all party positions concerning issues that affects politics. Usually, following the party politics literature from '60s or '70s, the Romanian political scientists tend to reduce, rather arbitrary, this scale to a particular policy dimension: either attitude toward economic reform, or attitude toward cultural values (as nationalism vs. cosmopolitanism etc). Following the recent literature, we suggest that the left-right dimension is a much more complex dimension and it can not be reduced to one punctual issue, it is rather an integration of all major aspects and party positions.

On our scale, the 0 end of the scale represented a location of left, while the 20 end a position located the parties at the right spectrum. As shown by table 20, from the six parties taken into consideration for the purpose of this research, three were located at the left spectrum, namely PSD, PUR and PRM. PD and UDMR were located at the centre of the scale, while PNL towards the right spectrum. An important aspect to be observed is the large standard deviation registered by PRM, 6.56. This underlines once again the debate that exists when considering the location of PRM on the left-right dimension, given the fact that it combines elements from both extremist right and left. Considering the economic aspects, that appeared to be extremely important for the experts that answered our survey when locating the parties on the

scales (according to the results of our survey, the three most important issues for party-competition in Romania in experts' perspective are: income taxation, the privatization of state enterprises, controlling inflation vs. unemployment), PRM is definitely seen at the left end of the scale. On the other hand, PSD was the only party that was clearly seen on only one side of the scale, the left one, receiving values ranging from 4 to 9.

Table 20: Left-right super-dimension of party competition

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Left-right dimension: PSD	17	5,88	1,45
Left-right dimension: PRM	16	5,63	6,56
Left-right dimension: PD	17	10,59	2,65
Left-right dimension: PNL	17	14,18	2,70
Left-right dimension: UDMR	16	11,81	2,97
Left-right dimension: PUR	14	8,86	2,60
Valid N (listwise)	12		

Analysing the party positions on these classical, more abstract issues, the most striking result is the smaller SDs we have obtained for almost all the parties that in the case of concrete issues. This suggests that political parties are more able to formulate coherent positions when they have to speak on a higher level of abstraction than in the case of specific policies. This would suggest that Romanian political parties still lack the capacity of formulate coherent specific public policies, merely because of the absence of professionalization of party activists and party staffs. Also, another interesting finding regarding these classical issues, is that political parties have on economic dimensions (or on those who contains economic factors as important elements, as the left-right dimension) smaller SDs than on those who involve cultural factors (nationalist values or role of religion in politics).

Classical issues of party competition

1. Left - right dimension

0	PRM	PSD		PUR		PD	UDMR		PNL		20
	5,63	5,88		8,86		10,59	11,81		14,18		

2. Economic freedom
(state interventionism vs. economic freedom)

0	PRM		PSD			PD	PUR		UDMR	PNL	20
	2,74		6,68			12,05	12,14		14,94	15,89	

3. Attachement to national values
(national values vs. cosmopolitan values)

0	PRM	PSD		PUR		PD	PNL		UDMR	20
	1,95	2,86		8,64		11,89	13,05		16,28	

4. Role of religion in politics
(clerical vs. secular)

0		PRM		UDMR	PSD 14,00	PD	PNL	20
		7,22		12,58	PUR	15,83	16,28	
					14,14			

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DIMENSIONALITY OF POLITICAL SPACE

In the previous part, we have presented, in an exploratory approach, the means and standard deviations of political parties on thirteen specific policy dimensions. In addition, four other classical dimensions for party competition (economic reform, clerical-secular, cosmopolitan-national, and left-right dimensions) have been considered. However, given the number of issues taken into consideration, we can not tell very precisely how many basic dimensions the Romanian party system contains. More precisely, we want to see how these thirteen policy issues are combining in underlying dimensions, and thus, to determine the dimensionality of competition in the Romanian party system. For such an endeavour we can not rely on issue saliency, and we shall apply two used methods of data reduction.

The first procedure to be used is factor analysis who identify the underlying variables (called *factors*), which explain the patterns of correlation within a given set of variables. For this purpose, we have used the party mean scores on our specific policy dimensions in order to generate the factor solution. Table 21 shows the number of factors, the initial Eigenvalues, the variance and the cumulative variance explained for our data set for the factor analysis with extraction of principal components and Varimax rotation method. As we can see in the SPSS output, the factor analysis identified thirteen components (or factors), but only two of them have the eigenvalues higher than 1. The first factor (Eigenvalues = 10,712) explains the variation in 82% of the total variance in all the variables, while the second factor is accounted for only 9,95%. After the rotation of the factors, the percentage of explained variance of the first factor is 52,39%, 39,95% and for the second factor, which would suggest that the Romanian space of party competition is bidimensional.

However, the contents of these factors are puzzling. As the most important issues for party competition, when calculating the means of issue saliency, were the economic ones (income taxation, privatization of state enterprises, and fighting inflation or unemployment), we expected to have these variables included in the first factor. Peculiarly, as table 22 shows, none of them seem to be included in the first factor since the correlations between them and first factor are lower than the ones between them and the second factor. In bold, we can see the highest correlations for each factor.

**Table 22: Rotated Component Matrix[a]
for the first two factors**

	Component	
	1	2
Social and health insurance	–,538	**,820**
Promoting foreign vs. domestic capital	**,776**	–,532
Privatization of state enterprises	,661	**–,738**
Welcome for foreign capital	**–,756**	,581
Inflation vs. unemployment	,626	**–,765**
Environmental protection	**,832**	–,138
Income taxation	,539	**–,771**
Minority rights	**,947**	–,254
Regionalization of Romania	**,902**	–,353
Reduce rural–urban differences	–2,E–02	**,992**
Status of Orthodox Church	**–,884**	,462
Income redistribution among counties	**–,826**	,548
Morality vs. freedom of mass–media	–,601	,685

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.
Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization.

a. Rotation converged in 3 iterations.

Table 21: Factors table and dimensionality of Romanian political space

Component	Initial Eigenvalues			Rotation Sums of Squared Loadings		
	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %
1	10,712	82,401	82,401	6,812	52,396	52,396
2	1,294	9,952	92,353	5,194	39,957	92,353
3	,648	4,985	97,338			
4	,305	2,349	99,687			
5	4,1E–02	,313	100,000			
6	1,1E–15	8,294E–15	100,000			
7	3,1E–16	2,410E–15	100,000			
8	2,2E–16	1,726E–15	100,000			
9	1,5E–16	1,173E–15	100,000			
10	–1,E–16	–7,957E–16	100,000			
11	–3,E–16	–2,551E–15	100,000			
12	–8,E–16	–6,430E–15	100,000			
13	–1,E–15	–9,712E–15	100,000			

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.

As it can be seen, the first factor contains mainly issues that could be categorized as "cultural", although, some of them (like welcome for foreign capital, income redistribution among counties etc) have a very powerful component. The second factor is composed by economic issues: privatization, combating inflation or unemployment, income taxation, contributions to the health insurance public system. The only issue that is marginal in this respect is the fighting the rural-urban differences, but even here it may be quite probable that experts had in mind the economic backward of rural areas compared with the urban zones. This result seems to confirm our initial hypothesis that the most important body of issues remains the cultural ones, although individually, they received lower scores on saliency for party competition.

We go now to the second method of data reduction, the cluster analysis. We have used, in this case, the hierarchical cluster analysis, with between-group linkage and squared Euclidean distance in order to group our variables. Below, table 23 presents the agglomeration schedule of clusters and the dendrogram the combination of the variables.

Table 23: Agglomeration Schedule

Stage	Cluster Combined		Coefficients	Stage Cluster First Appears		Next Stage
	Cluster 1	Cluster 2		Cluster 1	Cluster 2	
1	8	9	4,805	0	0	8
2	3	5	7,465	0	0	5
3	11	12	9,077	0	0	4
4	4	11	26,513	0	3	7
5	2	3	40,206	0	2	8
6	6	7	45,923	0	0	10
7	4	13	46,189	4	0	9
8	2	8	48,464	5	1	11
9	1	4	78,622	0	7	12
10	6	10	81,318	6	0	11
11	2	6	134,404	8	10	12
12	1	2	376,279	9	11	0

The computer identified two clusters (although the first one is not entirely consistent), suggesting, again, that political space of party competition is bi-dimensional. However, the components of the clusters are different than in the case of factor analysis, mainly because of different methods of combination. What makes us

reluctant to this result is the fact that in table 23 there is no big gap between the coefficients, which suggests that there is not a very good cluster solution. Moreover, there is no tool to assess the importance of different clusters (variables) in the final clusters, and thus, the factor analysis output seems to be a better solution for identifying underlying dimensions of party competition.

PROGRAMMATIC COMPETITION

As we have mentioned in the first part of the paper, programmatic competition primarily represents competition between opposable, clear identifiable party programs. Not neglecting the role of leaders or patronage linkages, programmatic competition emphasizes a set of policy positions which are salient for a particular country and which are known as being proper for the most important political parties from the party system. Following Kitschelt et al. (Kitschelt et al: 1999), we have developed three indicators of a programmatic party competition:

1. the agreement among experts about the placement of political parties;
2. the number of salient dimensions for party competition;
3. the polarization of political parties on the salient dimensions.

Our results about programmatic competition are quite puzzling, relying only on the expert evaluations. The difficulty of assessing the features of party competition comes from the fact that some indicators incline toward a programmatic competition, while others strongly deny the possibility that Romanian parties compete through identifiable programs. First of all, as table 24 shows, we have a large disagreement between experts about the real positions of political parties not only on salient issues, but also on non-salient ones. Since we conclude from the very beginning that a party competition requires most clear identifiable party positions, this indicator shows a strong tendency toward a non-programmatic competition.

Fig. 3: The dendrogram for cluster combination

```
* * * * * * H I E R A R C H I C A L   C L U S T E R    A N A L Y S I S * * * * * *

 Dendrogram using Average Linkage (Between Groups)

                    Rescaled Distance Cluster Combine

    C A S E         0         5        10        15        20        25
    Label    Num    +---------+---------+---------+---------+---------+

    MINRIGHT   8     ┐
    REGIONAL   9     ┘
    PRIVATIZ   3     ┐
    INFLVSUN   5     ┘
    FORINVES   2
    ENVIRONM   6     ┐
    INCTAXAT   7     ┘
    URBANRUR  10
    ORTHODCH  11     ┐
    INCREDIS  12     ┘
    WELFINVE   4
    MASSMED   13
    SOCSYS     1
```
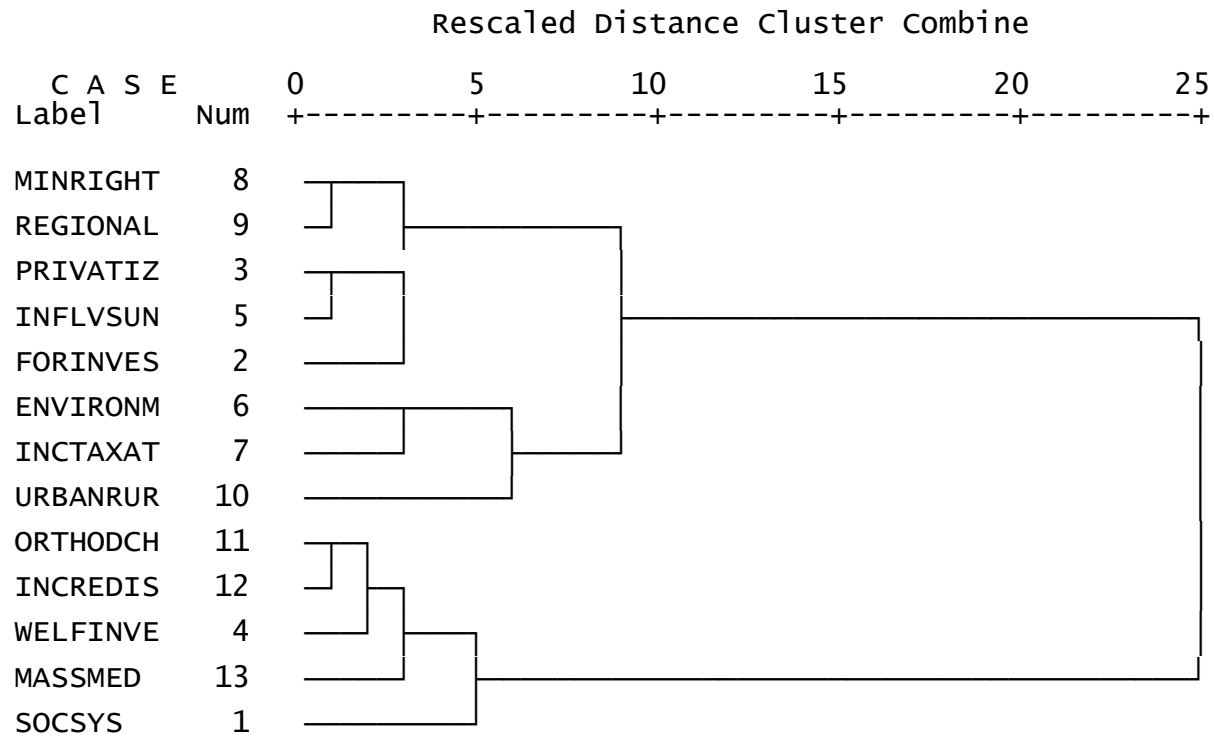
On the other hand, we found only few salient dimensions (five) which were rated higher than 3.00 on our saliency scale. Moreover, none of them was considered to be highly salient, in the sense than none scored more than 4.00. Also, as table 25 shows, the polarization of political parties, measured as the SD of party means, are quite large, including the salient dimensions. Some of the salient issues, as predicted in the hypothesis 3, have lower SD than the non-salient ones (income taxation, fighting inflation or unemployment), although their scores were higher than 3.00. Others, issues with high conflicting potential like privatization or minority rights, scored ones of the largest SD of whole set of issues. Thus, both these two indicators (polarization and few salient issues) would indicate a programmatic competition between Romanian political parties.

However, given the fact that disagreement between experts was extremely high regarding political parties position on salient dimensions, we tend to consider the political competition as being rather non-programmatic. Although we can not measure the impact of the indicators, it seems that this indicator is the most important when we talk about programmatic competition, because it shows the existence of what we called "clear identifiable party programs". Polarization, on the other hand, although come closer to the same point, shows mainly disagreement between parties about a specific public policy, rather than identifies a party position. Finally, number of salient dimensions represents the capacity of parties to formulate coherent programs on a limited number of issues.

From the point of view of the initial hypotheses, we surprisingly found out that economic issues and not the socio-cultural ones (as predicted by the hypothesis 3) were the most salient for party divides. Although the external pressure over political parties to implement economic reforms (privatization, restructuring the industry etc) from international organization remains at high levels, and thus, they should have narrower manoeuvring space, it seems that party competition in Romania is merely determined by position of political parties, however inconsistent they are, on economic issues. For sure, some cultural issues, like minority rights, affect to certain extent the competition between political parties, especially the one between UDMR and PRM, and they should not be neglected. However, the most salient issues remain the economic ones, at least from expert point of view.

**Table 24: Standard deviations of political parties on all issues**

	PSD	PRM	PD	PNL	UDMR	PUR	TOTAL
Social and health insurance	4,54	5,21	3,69	4,96	4,20	4,45	4,50
Promoting foreign vs. domestic capital	2,25	1,94	1,78	3,75	3,35	3,37	2,74
Privatization	4,08	2,69	3,14	3,33	3,48	4,29	3,55
Welcome for foreign capital	3,53	4,79	4,69	4,83	4,91	4,77	4,58
Inflation vs. unemployment	3,78	2,89	4,12	3,46	3,09	4,90	3,70
Environmental protection	2,54	3,76	2,97	4,07	4,17	3,01	3,42
Income taxation	4,10	5,33	3,37	4,91	3,30	2,94	3,99
Minority rights	3,88	1,73	3,27	2,97	2,09	4,66	3,10
Regionalization	3,68	1,99	3,90	3,97	3,01	4,27	3,47
Reduce the rural-urban differences	3,05	3,34	3,68	4,34	4,37	3,53	3,71
Orthodox Church	3,91	2,87	2,72	4,12	1,81	4,68	3,35
Income redistribution among counties	3,20	3,64	3,06	3,50	2,96	4,61	3,49
Morality vs. freedom of mass media	3,92	7,22	3,08	2,73	2,80	4,98	4,12
TOTAL	**3,57**	**3,64**	**3,34**	**3,91**	**3,34**	**4,18**	

Table 25: Polarization of political parties on all issues

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Social and health insurance	6	7,9733	3,6686
Promoting foreign vs. domestic capital	6	12,1017	4,6375
Privatization of state enterprises	6	10,3667	5,2640
Welcome for foreign capital	6	10,7367	4,9500
Inflation vs. unemployment	6	10,0350	4,2402
Environmental protection	6	13,6783	1,1550
Income taxation	6	12,0817	3,1190
Minority rights	6	10,4367	5,6257
Regionalization of Romania	6	9,8733	5,4550
Reduce rural–urban differences	6	10,8383	1,2541
Status of Orthodox Church	6	10,0083	5,9905
Income redistribution among judete	6	10,5383	5,0549
Morality vs. freedom of mass–media	6	11,4500	4,0077
Economic freedom vs. interventionism	6	10,7400	5,0660
Role of religion in politics	6	13,3433	3,2844
Attachment to national values	6	9,6517	5,2613
Left–right	6	9,4917	3,3739
Valid N (listwise)	6		

Taking into consideration the most salient dimensions, the competition between political parties should be determined by their positions on these two axes. Figure 4 shows the distribution of political parties on income taxation and privatization of state enterprises and their ideological sectors (taking into consideration the standard deviations on these issues). As we can see from the indifference curves of the parties, each political actor, excepting PSD, regards differently these two salient dimensions. PRM, for instance, it seems much more sensitive to privatization issue (lower SD) than in the case of income taxation, which shows us that the issue of privatization is regarded as much more salient.
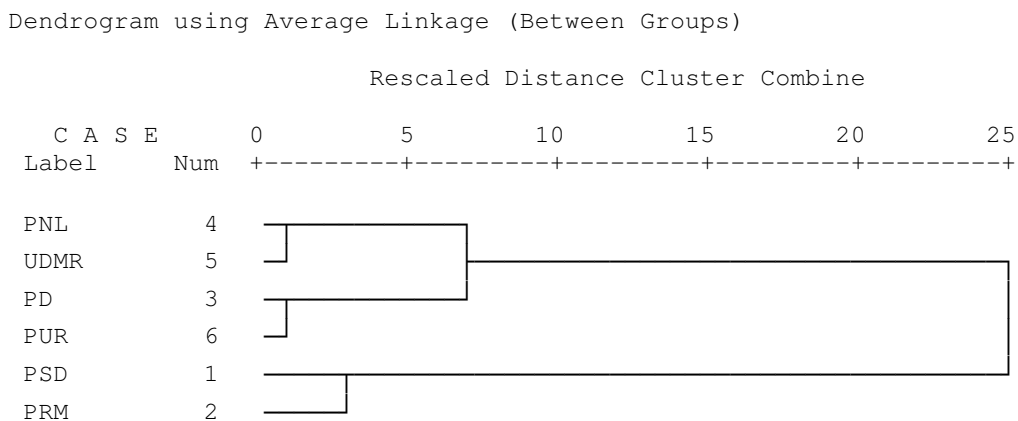
Fig. 1: Distribution of Romanian parties on the most salient dimensions: income taxation and privatization

Income taxation

PRM

PSD

PD

PUR

UDMR

PNL
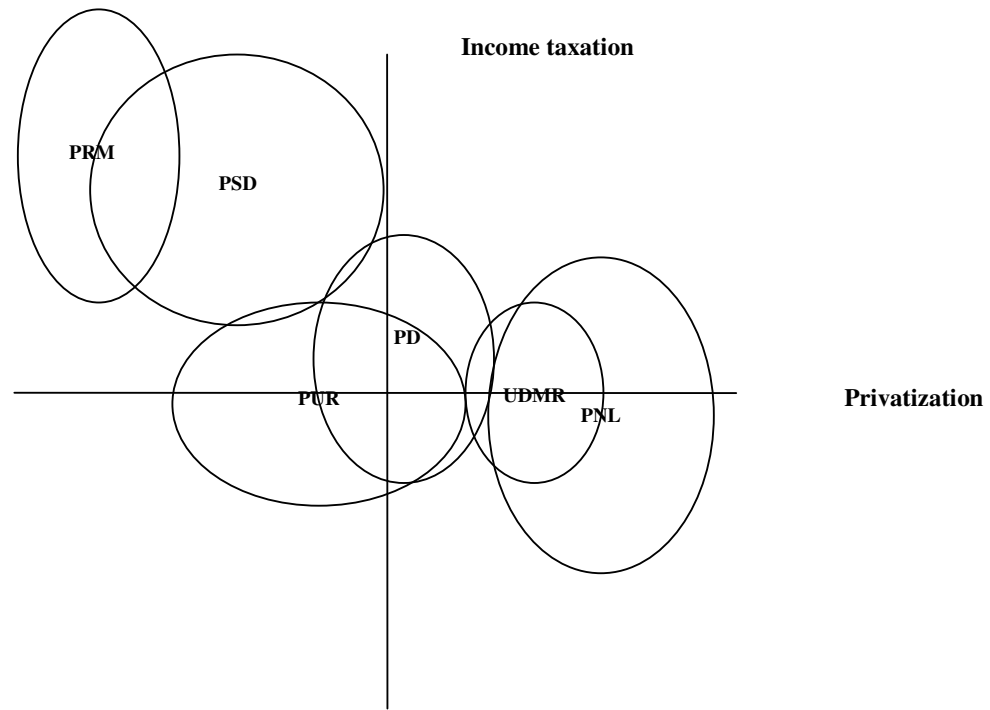
Privatization

Thus, following the indifference curves, we can say that PRM is willing to allow a bigger manoeuvring space on this dimension, while it is compensating on privatization issue, where the ideological space is narrower. Also, PNL, UDMR and PD seem to be much more sensitive to privatization than to income taxation, although the last issue received the highest score on saliency scale, while PUR is much more ideological interested about the income taxation. However, we should keep in mind that the experts had generally difficulties in assessing the positions of this party, as many of them preferred to restrain themselves from grading it. This is partially because this party never has passed an electoral test by its own, and thus country experts have little information to evaluate its policy positions. PSD is the only party who regards both issues as being equally salient.
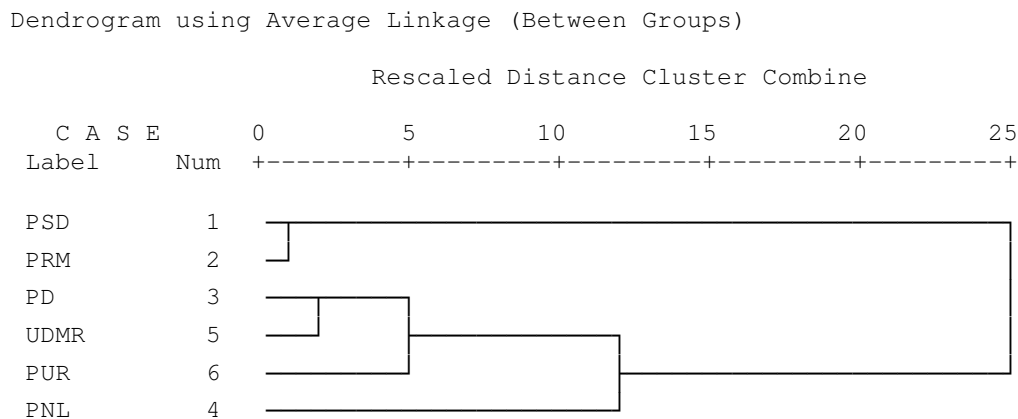
Also, in a sense, figure 4 is summing up all information about party competition in Romania. From this visual representation, we can see than the greatest ideological overlapping is between PSD and PRM, while on the opposed part of political spectrum, UDMR and PNL share a large common ideological area. Figure 5 presents us the combination of political parties taking into consideration their positions on the most salient issues (income taxation and privatization), who gives us the same results as those indicated by figure 4.

Fig. 5: The combination of political parties determined by their positions on salient issues

```
Dendrogram using Average Linkage (Between Groups)

                        Rescaled Distance Cluster Combine

   C A S E      0         5        10        15        20        25
   Label    Num +---------+---------+---------+---------+---------+

   PNL        4   ─┐
                   ├───────────┐
   UDMR       5   ─┘           │
                               ├──────────────────────────────────┐
   PD         3   ─┐           │                                   │
                   ├─┘                                             │
   PUR        6   ─┘                                               │
   PSD        1   ────────────┐                                    │
                              ├─────────────────────────────────────┘
   PRM        2   ────────────┘
```

However, when we introduce the all possible dimensions of competition (what we usually call left-right dimension), the configuration of clusters slightly differs. Figure 6 shows us the combination of political parties based on their position on left-right political dimension, using the hierarchical cluster analysis with between-group linkages. In this case, PNL is somehow isolated in the second cluster, although it is combined with PD-UDMR-PUR cluster. PRM and PSD are still parts of the same group, while PD, UDMR and PUR are combined in the same cluster.

Fig. 6: The cluster combination based on party positions on left-right dimension

```
Dendrogram using Average Linkage (Between Groups)

                    Rescaled Distance Cluster Combine

   C A S E       0         5        10        15        20        25
   Label    Num  +---------+---------+---------+---------+---------+

   PSD        1  ─┐
   PRM        2  ─┘                                                 │
   PD         3  ─┐                                                 │
   UDMR       5  ─┤                                                 │
   PUR        6  ─┘                                                 │
   PNL        4  ─────────────────────┘
```

CONCLUSION

In this paper we have followed two main aims. The first one, which represented the explorative approach, was to present a map of policy positions of Romanian political parties which might affect the competition for votes. The second goal was to determine whether or not the Romanian political parties use programmatic appeals (identifiable, particular policy positions) in their political competition. Inevitably, our approach was constrained by the data availability, and, in this respect, further studies have to be done, mainly those who survey how population feel about the party positions and self-placements, in order to establish elite-voters linkages. But in the same time, this research represents the first scholarly attempt (at least from our knowledge) to clarify the positions of political parties on several theoretically important dimensions outside of the electoral period. The replication of the study or inside analysis taken from parliamentary survey would be highly recommended, although such an endeavor would limit the possibility of comparative studies.

The question to which we are not in the position to give a clear answer, since we are dealing with only one case, is whether institutional framework is strong enough to counterbalance the legacies of pre-communist and communist past, or these past influences are still the first determinants of party competition. From this point of view, larger comparative studies are needed to be implemented. However, in Romanian case, these institutional factors, like electoral systems and the form of government, have not conducted yet to programmatic party competition, although incipient forms (given the polarization of parties, number of salient dimensions) could be seen at a closer examination.

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