Party identification in Romania after 1990: relevance, measurements and development

Gabriela Borz
Central European University
phbog02@phd.ceu.hu

- very first draft-
Paper presented at the ECPR Joint Sessions, Nicosia 2006
Workshop ‘Beyond’ party identification and beyond
1. Introduction

For Eastern European societies, the challenge of political scientists is to discover more about the source of party identification and how this phenomenon develops. The paper discusses the relevance and origin of concepts like party identification, party loyalty and partisanship for post-communist Romania after 1990.

Can we really speak of party identification, partisanship and party loyalty in post-communist Eastern Europe after 1990 or do these take years, even decades to develop? The discussion of definitions and operationalizations of the above concepts is of tremendous importance since studies have arrived with different results about party identification in the East European context, like for example in Russia and Ukraine after 1990 (Miller & Klobucar 2000; White, Rose and McAllister 1997).

This paper questions the relevance of the above concepts for Eastern Europe after 1990 and especially their measurements. Do Eastern Europeans really identify with a political party after 1990 given the high levels of electoral volatility between elections? Do they feel close to a certain political party and do they really have a political party which expresses their views?

The research uses Romania as a case study and presents a longitudinal analysis from 1990 to 2005. The goal is to see if we can speak of long-term party loyalties or short-term political preferences. Besides the measurement issues, the paper examines the determinants of party identification in Romania, and offers possible explanations for its low level after sixteen years of democratic rule. The hypothesis is that, valance issues like performance evaluation account more for the origin of party identification in the post-communist context than social identities or position issues. The independent variables introduced are satisfaction with democracy and government performance, satisfaction with market economy, age and education. The data employed in the analysis are annual country surveys after 1990 until 2004.
2. Short Literature Review

The problem of party identification and its level in Central Eastern Europe has attracted the interests of political scientists after 1990s. As defined in the classical works, the concept has two central elements: *the identification* as “an attachment to a party that helps the citizen locate him/herself and others on the political landscape” (Campbell et al. 1986: 100) and the *time horizon*, party identification being conceptualized as an “enduring” underlying orientation (Blais et al. 2001: 6). For Eastern Europe, the challenge for researchers is to discover more about the origins of partisanship and how the phenomenon develops. Therefore the paper examines the possible determinants of partisanship in Romania after 1990 and offers possible explanations for its low levels.

**Partisanship** has been defined as matter of self-definition and most of the times; its definition incorporates the idea of identification, a psychological and personal identification with a political party (Miller and Klobucar 2000: 668). **Party loyalty** on the other side is a much broader concept, implies more a stability of the political preferences and consequently of voting. **Party identification** has been seen as a psychological attachment between the voter and the party (Campbell et al. 1960), but as Brynin and Sanders (1997) have shown, it is not always the case that party identification goes hand in hand with the actual vote. Voting can be strategic as well in order to protect the district against unwanted candidates, who are likely to win the elections. Still, the identification is expected to remain stable and the vote will return to the same party in the next elections. While partisanship implies a frequent interaction with the party, participation in its activities, it is therefore linked to the concepts of membership and party activists, party loyalty requires a stable vote for the same party, party identification does not always require a stable vote, it can refer to party members and party activists but not only to them. Any voter can have a strong party identification without actively participating in the party’s day-to-day activities. Still in most cases party identification is expected to be associated with a vote for the same party.

While authors use all these concepts interchangeably, this paper will only deal with party identification understood as a long-term stable psychological attachment to a certain political party.
2.1 Measurement issues for Central Eastern Europe

In order to measure party identification, US studies use the common question “Generally speaking, do you usually think of yourself as a Republican, a Democrat, an independent or what? After the party identification is specified, the next question is “Would you call yourself a strong Republican/Democrat or not a very strong Republican/Democrat?” The answers are combined on a scale ranging from a strong Republican/Democrat to a not a very strong Republican/Democrat.

The common question used to type party identification so far in Europe is “Do you identify with any particular political party or movement?” (White, Rose and McAllister 1997). The BES question is similar to the American one and asks: “Generally speaking, do you think of yourself as Conservative, Labour, Liberal or what?” While it was argued that that this measurement is seriously faulted, the new Essex question proposed was ”Many people think of themselves as being Conservative, Labour, Liberal-Democrat (or Nationalists), even if they don’t always support that party. How about you? Generally speaking, do you think of yourself as Conservative, Labour, Liberal Democrat (or Nationalist), or don’t you think of yourself as any of these?”(Bartle 1999).

White, Rose and McAllister (1997) study used for Russia the direct question: “Do you identify with any particular party or movement?” whereas Miller and Klobucar (2000) employed a battery of three questions to measure party identification: 1. “Is there a party that best express your views better than any other party?” If the respondent says “yes” than the next question is (2) “which party is that?” and then they are asked (3) “how close they feel to this party. “ These different questions gave completely different results. Their finding was that a significant percentage of the Russians and Ukrainians were currently identifying with a political party (55% of Russians interviewed). On the contrary, White, Rose and McAllister study has found that Russia had 22% of party identifiers and 78% nonidentifiers.

When one asks different questions, different results are expected and at the same time a lot of criticism has been expressed against the previously mentioned questions. A recent criticism against the measures used so far in two party systems was that it relies on providing cognitive cues by explicitly asking respondents to think about their party identification. When experimenting a new battery of questions in which the respondents were asked to feel rather than think, the citizens appeared more Republican than previously measured (Burden and Klofstad 2005). Moreover for the case of new democracies where people do not know what to identify with
a certain party means, or do not feel close to any political party, the distortion that may appear is that they may feel very close to certain political leaders (Barnes, McDonough, Lopez, Pina 1985). For an extreme right party where the leader usually ‘is’ the party this may seem a reasonable measurement but for the rest of parties it is not the case.

In Eastern Europe, not only that the respondents do not understand the questions, but given the communist experience, when to identify with a party meant to obey the communist party, but for most of them this produced repugnance and distrust in any political party after 1989. What I will argue in this paper is that it is inappropriate to apply the common measures used so far as a valid and acceptable measurement for party identification for post-communist societies. It is problematical to measure something that is not yet crystallized and stable. Identification with and attachment to a political party are misleading concepts and a direct question using these concepts only confuses the respondents. In a multiparty system where the number of parties increases and decreases from election to election, where the party programs are not clearly crystallized, it is difficult to identify yourself with a political party. At the very best it is easy to get attached to political personalities rather than to political parties.

The use of panel data (Brader, Tucker 2001) has been proposed as a good method for measuring party identification by checking the voting loyalty over time and the consistency of one’s attitudes towards parties. Still the questions to be asked are faulted and more often reflect a short time span and a variable doze of social desirability if there is no option for the “independent” version. For the Romanian case, the paper will use two different questions and check if the results are different.

2.1 Explanations for the development of party identification

From US, the theories about party identification have been applied mainly to Western Europe, in established democracies while few attempts have been made for Central Eastern Europe. One of the most famous and controversial was Converse’s theory (1969), which is explaining partisanship as a process that may take years, decades to develop. According to him, party identification is a “life cycle process resulting from social learning, and intergenerational transmission process based on father’s partisanship” (Cassel 1993: 664). The theory states that younger people are less partisan compared to the older people, and usually they are likely to identify with the same party as their father is/used to identify himself. Considering the life cycle,
Converse assessed that in an established democracy, something like 50 years period is needed for partisanship to develop: the citizen may be independent at 20 years age old, a weak partisan at the age of 40 and strong partisans at the age of 70 (Cassel 1993: 665). Converse assumed partisanship is in a high degree the result of an accumulated experience with the political parties and elections. Therefore only after a long period of time like one and a half generation (75 years) the partisanship will reach its maximum strength. Converse was heavily criticized for this model, and especially for the life-cycle explanation that he offered.

Later models show that economic performance may also affect partisanship/party identification (Franklin and Jackson 1983). Scholars like Rose (1997), Filippov and Shvetsova (1996), Kitschelt (1998) argue that political parties in post-communist countries these societies are not able to attract people’s loyalty because of the bad experience with the communist party, but others have found a considerable percentage of Russian who identify themselves with a political party and have a sophisticated way of understanding the politics. 20% of the Russian were found to have a party that best represents their interest in 1992, 52% in 1995 and 61% in 1997 (White, Rose and McAllister 1997; Miller and Klobucar 2000; Brader and Tucker 2001). The debate is more around how to measure party identification in these societies and the problem is the lack of a generally acceptable measure for the concept.

As for the factors influencing the development of party identification, in Western democracies the expectations are that it is positively correlated with attitudes that favor democracy like political participation expressed by vote (Blais 2001: 6). But what White, Rose and McAllister (1997: 136) have found about post-soviet Russia is that partisanship is influenced by authoritarianism, education, age, previous Communist Party membership, blaming capitalists for economic problems, although the variance explained by the model was only 10%. The other variables used in the model were trust in traditional institutions, communist party membership, gender, urbanization, holding books at home. Their model contains more than ten explanatory factors but its explanatory power is very weak, only around 10 percent.

The lack of partisanship was also related to alienation where political alienation was seen as the reverse of the political support, a weak relationship between the society and its political system. In Western democracies, issues like EU, NATO membership, economic situation, the problems with the immigrants and welfare issues can generate political alienation. In Eastern Europe, alienation is related to dissatisfaction with democracy, opposition to the government policy on
various issues and disappointment with the economic development of the country (Borre 2000: 285).

While Converse and Pierce (1992: 240) argue that most of the time the line of causation “goes from partisan attachment to other specific political sentiments, including vote choice, rather than vice versa.” the situation may be different for Central Eastern Europe. If we think of party attachment as of a stable attitude, then most of the theories in political and social psychology would argue that it is realistic to predict the future behavior from that attitude. If the attitude is not stable than the prediction of behavior becomes weak. But at the same time any attitude is subject to change in a small or high degree and as Clarke et al. (2004) mention identification falls into this category as well. Cumulative political experience may modify the party identification from election to election and consequently we would expect a lower degree of stability in the party identification as expressed by Central East Europeans.

If an attitude is central for the self-definition of the individual (i.e. central to the value system of the individual) this attitude is of prime importance and therefore less likely to change. By extrapolation, if politics and democracy have an important role in the individuals’ life, than party identification is expected to remain stable over time. Moreover the lower the degree of differentiation of the beliefs (i.e. the smaller the number of cognitive elements in an attitude) the easier it is for the attitude to change (McGuire 1999) Therefore if the questions measuring party identification as a long term psychological attachment ask the respondents to think about their identification, they point to a more stable attitude than as when it would ask them only to feel.

Taking into account the stable levels of party identification in the US it seems reasonable for scholars to argue that this in turn will influence the attitudes towards democracy, economic situation and voting (Campbell et al. 1960, Converse and Pierce 1992). Budge et al. (1976) have been among the first ones to mention the close relationship between party identification and current party preference. Others like Brynin and Sanders (1997) have also emphasized the association between party identification and voting but due to the close relation between the two variables they highlight that party identification cannot be a causal factor operational on the vote. Therefore given the unclear relation between the two variables, this paper will treat the vote intention both as a dependent and independent variable.
Considering the other factors mentioned above, the causal link between party identification and attitudes toward democracy and market economy is completely reversed in Central Eastern Europe. After the communist period the first concern was a stable economic situation and the stable link between the party and the voter was completely non-existent. In this context it is expected that the satisfaction with the market economy will be one of the major factors helping the individuals to decide and develop stable links with parties and certain political orientations. The major hypothesis to be tested is that valance issues like performance evaluation account more for the origin of party identification in the post-communist context than social identities or position issues. The independent variables introduced are satisfaction with market economy, satisfaction with democracy, age and education plus vote intention.

The next section of the paper discusses the available measurements for party identification in Romania after 1990 and its evolution looking also at the level of trust in political parties, political opinions about the necessity of many parties or a single party in the political arena. The last section will retest some of the hypotheses already stated in the literature about the education, age and satisfaction with democracy as explanatory factors for the evolution of party identification and try to clarify the relationship between party identification and vote intention.

3. Development of party identification in Romania after 1990

Before starting any discussion about a proper measurement for party identification, it is appropriate to discuss about the relevance of applying different common measurements, when instead the attention should be concentrated on a measurement for the development of party identification. As the figures show, the levels of trust in political parties are dramatically low and vary also from season to season, year to year. It is very hard to speak of party identification in the early 1990s when such a large percentage of the respondents do not see the relevance of having a multiparty system.

As it is presented in figure 1, the level of trust in political parties was extremely low. From 1996 until 2001, the percentages of those who had a low trust up to none-existent was between 30 and 50. After 2001 the frequency of those who didn’t trust the parties at all slowly decreased but it still remained between 25 and 33 percent of the respondents. This still did not men that the percentages of those who had a lot of trust in parties increased, on the contrary, the level remained really low for the whole period, between a minimum of 0.8 and 1.8 percentages points out of the
whole sample of respondents. 2000 appears as a cut off point in the evolution of politics and of the relationship between parties and citizens. The number of those who become very much interested in politics increased with 12 percentage points from 2000 to 2001 (from 6.2 to 18.9 percent), but still this did not affect the level of trust in political parties. It added though to the level of information about politics in general, which means that citizens started to gain more knowledge about the political life in Romania.

**Figure 1.**

![Evolution of trust in political parties](image1)

**Figure 2.**

![Desirability of there being only one party](image2)
The low level of trust in political parties was supplemented by a low level knowledge about multiparty systems and the advantages of having more than one party. Accustomed with a single dominant party during the communism, the idea of having more than 100 in the early 1990s was not commonly embraced and the more parties there were, the more confused the electorate became. Between 2002 and 2004, 15-20 percentage points of the respondents consider that it is better to have a single political party but the figures were much higher before 2000 as it is shown by the scatter plot in figure 2. Gradually by 2004 more than 70 percent of the Romanians acknowledge the necessity of the political parties for the democratic life and only around 15 percent of the subjects declare that it would be good to have only one political party.

What the figures 1 and 2 clearly show is 1990s a period of confusion with clear low levels of any trust in parties and even in their existence and functions not to mentions a general lack of interest in national politics. In a context like this, the applicability of questions typing the level of party identification is problematic and the results could be seriously doubted. If almost half of the population does not trust any political party and does not see the point in having more than one political party, then the question asking to identify with a political party adds more to the confusion and out of social desirability everybody will answer yes or no like in the Russian or Ukrainian case, thing which clearly questions the validity of those studies.

After 2000, the year of the forth democratic election held after the collapse of communism, gradually the citizens get accustomed with the rules of the game, understand the system better and even the role of political parties in the political system. In this context, the validity of a question typing party identification for the long run would not be that problematic.

**Party identification,** if it is to follow the previous studies conducted in the region could be measured by asking the following question: “Do you think, that currently in Romania, exists at least one political party that best represents/defends your interests?” The possible answers are: 1. Yes; 2: No; 8: Do not know; 9: Do not answer.

The question has been used in the Romanian public opinion barometers since 2002 and it follows the question about the vote intention, like in the British questionnaires, from specific to general without putting too much pressure on the respondents to be consistent in their answers. Table 1 presents the situation and evolution of party identification as it is tapped by this question. As it can easily be seen, there is variation from year to year especially between 2003 and 2004; but
there is also variation within the same year, between the responses in the spring and the responses in winter 2003. The subjects seem happier and open in the spring as compared to winter when all the worries related to the living standard get amplified. At the same time the number of non-identifiers decreased from October 2003 to October 2004, which is justifiable given the proximity of November 2004 elections and the increased level of interest and trust in political parties.

Table 1. Evolution of party identification

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>At the moment in Romania, is there a political party which represents/protects your interests?</th>
<th>May 2002</th>
<th>October 2002</th>
<th>May 2003</th>
<th>October 2003</th>
<th>October 2004</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Do not answer</td>
<td>1.3%</td>
<td>1.1%</td>
<td>2.3%</td>
<td>1.5%</td>
<td>2.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do not know</td>
<td>14.2%</td>
<td>12.8%</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>11.7%</td>
<td>16.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>34.6%</td>
<td>38.1%</td>
<td>34.4%</td>
<td>32.3%</td>
<td>34.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>49.9%</td>
<td>48.0%</td>
<td>47.2%</td>
<td>54.4%</td>
<td>46.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2212</td>
<td>2128</td>
<td>2100</td>
<td>2035</td>
<td>1800</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Since 2002, between 32 and 34 percent of Romanians declare they have a party, which best represents, their interests and the percentage remains stable since 2004. The number of non-identifiers remained also constant around 50 percent but with high variations between May and October 2003 and between the responses given in October each year. October 2003 seems the pick of non-identification when 54.4 percent of the respondents do not feel close to any party and do not think that a political party can defend their interests.

In contrast to what Goren (2005) stipulates about the US partisan identities, being more stable than principles of equal opportunity, limited government, traditional family values and moral tolerance, the situation is not the same in post-communist Romania when party identification fluctuates more than the these political values.

If one looks at the difference in the reported party which represents their interests from 2003 to 2004, the identifiers change the party easily, the differences in the percentage of identifiers for parties are around 2 or 3 percent, which is a clear sign of short-term loyalties.
The question used in the surveys has many faults if one thinks of party identification as having a cognitive and affective component. First of all it implies a very short time span because it specifies ‘at this moment’ and it clearly highlights a short-term preference, which could change depending on the improvement of life style, economic situation or other causes. The question as it is does not reflect any enduring self-identity. Secondly the independents are not given any choice and they could increase the number of non-identifiers. Thirdly, instead of asking about the representation of opinions/views, the question points to the representation of interests which gives the impression of possible clientelistic linkages between the party and its supporters. The question may as well be taken as an evaluation of how well the parties fulfill the representation function.

If we compare these results with the results obtained by Miller and Klobucar in Russia and Ukraine, the differences are visible. A much lower percent of the Romanians appear as identifiers as compared to the Russians and the Romanian surveys were conducted after 2000. In both cases the results should be interpreted with caution and no generalization should be made about long term enduring identification with a party when the question only types the short term relation between the individual, its views/interests and the way the parties pursue in the realization of those goals. The questions assumed that the citizens have the views/interests clearly defined, know the programs of the parties and parties have also a clear stance on every issue, situation that was almost inexistent in the early 1990s. There was no clear division between different political orientations, no clear position on the left-right scale, especially if we take into account that the left wing parties were the ones to introduce the harsh economic reforms and the right wing parties the ones to promote more social redistribution.

The identification could develop first towards a political orientation, like social-democrat, communist, Christian-democrat, liberal, nationalist if we consider the high number of parties and the fact that more than one party used to belong to one political orientation after 1990. When interviewed about their political orientation in winter 2000, 24.5 percent of Romanians declare that they do not feel attached to any political orientation even if they are told the possible choices. Moreover, the percent of those who do not know and do not answer to this question is also high (16.5), summing up to 40 percent of the Romanian citizens who are not interested or do not feel attached to any political orientation. These results go hand in hand with the ones on party identification as it is measured by the previous question. Moreover even among those Romanians who have heard about political left and right and have an understanding of what they mean, 36.6 of them did not know how to position themselves on the scale in 2003.
The identification with the Communist political orientation is lower than expected. Only 2.9 of the respondents who feel comfortable to express their ideological position declared themselves communists. This goes against the common expectation that most of the party identifiers are ex-communists.

What can be concluded from this section is that it is difficult to speak and consequently to measure party identification as a long-term loyalty in early 1990s in Romania. What can be measured is a short-term party identification, more exactly a party preference, more visible after 2000 and supported by more informed citizens and with more trust in political parties. What needs to be mentioned is that in early 1990s political parties were not objects of such importance to voters, most of them did not see the need of having more than one political party. Consequently it is still important to distinguish between short-term and long-term loyalties because what can be measured in Romania at this time is only short-time preferences. Only checking the consistency of voting from one election to another could ascertain long-term loyalties in that context. The long-term loyalty has to be build in time after there is a certain party programmatic consistency and internal party unity. In the absence of long term internal party loyalties as shown by party splits and MPs defecting easily from their party it would be surprising to expect from citizens long term loyalties towards parties.

In terms of measurement for party identification, the two questions could be used as a battery together, one representing the cognitive element (parties as instruments to defend/represent interests) and the second one the affective element (attachment towards a political orientation). For reasons pertaining with the data availability, this battery of questions could not be tested and validated against more annual surveys.

4. Determinants of short-term party identification

The aim of this section is to retest of the hypotheses already stated in the literature on party identification against the Romanian data. For the dependent variable the question typing the short-term party identification will be used. The first test will be on the direct effect of age, education, satisfaction with democracy and of satisfaction with market economy on party identification. The second test is on the indirect effect of some of the listed explanatory variables on the response variable. The relation between vote intention and party identification will also be tested. The aim
is to come up with a simple causal model explaining party identification and its development in Romania after early 1990s.

The hypotheses, which will be the focus of analysis, are as follows:

**H1**: Party identification is influenced by *age*, older citizens are expected to be more partisan than the young ones.

After 50 years of communist rule, the expectation is that the older citizens, due to membership in the Communist Party, will transmit this attachment to the post communist party.

**H2**: Party identification is related to the level of *education*, the better educated being more prone to have a party that best represents their interests.

The more citizens become accustomed with democracy, the more they will learn the rules of the game, acknowledge the importance of political parties in a democratic environment and gradually develop an attachment to a political party.

**H3**: Lack of party identification is positively related to *dissatisfaction about how democracy* functions in Romania.

The expectation is that citizens will reject the way democracy has been implemented in Romania, and will not develop loyalties towards political parties because of that reason. If citizens become alienated with the system then they will reject each element, which is associated with it.

**H4**: Lack of party identification is positively related with *dissatisfaction with the way in which market economy* functions in Romania.

As mentioned before this is the major factor expected to influence the development of party identification. Due to a lack of party traditions like in the American or British case, the loyalties will not be constructed based on class or social status but on the basis valence issues such as evaluating the performance of government in implementing the economic reforms and evaluating the way market economy started to function in Romania.

Given the unclear status of *vote intention* in relation to party identification, the paper aims to test if party identification and vote intention vary together and will treat vote intention as a dependent and independent variable as well. The logic line of causation would be that attitude should be followed by behavior; therefore in the vast majority of identifiers cases, the vote intention is expected to be present.
4.1. Data and variables

The data used in the analysis consist of surveys conducted in Romania from May 2002 to November 2004 and organized by MetroMedia Transilvania and sponsored by Open Society Institute.1

The dependent variable is party identification and for its operationalization the following question was used:

“Do you think, that currently in Romania, exists at least one political party that best represents/defends your interests?”

The possible answers are: 1. Yes; 2: No; 8: Do not know; 9: Do not answer. The variable was recoded as a dichotomous one, with value 1 as “YES”, value 2 as “NO” and the other responses (8&9) were recoded as system missing.

The independent variables employed in the analysis are satisfaction with democracy, satisfaction with market economy, age and education.

Satisfaction with democracy is measured by the question: “How satisfied are you with the way in which democracy works in Romania? The answers are ranged from 1 to 5, where, 1 means “very unsatisfied”, 2 “unsatisfied”, 3 “neither satisfied nor unsatisfied”, 4 “satisfied” and 5 “very satisfied”. 8 (do not know) and 9 (do not answer) were recoded as system missing. Satisfaction with market economy has the same question: “How satisfied are you with the way in which market economy functions in Romania?” and the answers are on the same scale from 1 to 5. The corresponding recoding of the variable was done, with do not know and do not answer being considered as system missing. These two variables are treated equally in the model because theoretically they belong to the concept of alienation, only that one is political and the other one is more of economical type.

The background variables are age which is a continuous variable coded as an interval one with 3 categories: 1: Between 18-34 years old; 2: 35-54; 3: over 55 years old and 9 was for the non-response.

---
1 The data is available on-line at: http://www.osf.ro/ro/bop/cercetare.html
Education is taped by the question “What is the last school that you have completed?” This variable is also continuous and the responses are arrayed on a scale from 1 to 10, where 1 is no school; 2 is primary school; 3 is secondary school; 4 apprentice school; 5 is two years of high school; 6 high school completed; 7 professional school (after high school); 8 college (3 years); 9 undergraduate studies; 10 postgraduate studies; 99 option was for “do not answer” and was recoded as system missing.

4.2 Analysis and discussion

For the first step of the analysis a direct logistic regression was applied when all the variables were included simultaneously and this step allowed the evaluation of the direct contribution of each predictor controlling for all the rest. As table 2 shows, the R square of the model in all three cases is quite low, between 0.13 and 0.24, which means that in the later case, only 24 percent of the variance in the registered level of party identification is explained by the model. Even if the explanatory power of the model is not that high, it is definitely improved as compared to that of the model used by White, Rose and McAllister (1997:136) to explain partisanship in Russia. They have 10 independent variables and the explained variance was only 10%, while the present model with 5 independent variables has a double value of R Square in 2003.

Table 2. Logistic regression coefficients

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2002</th>
<th>2003</th>
<th>2004</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Model (partyID=dep.var., satisfaction-democracy, satisfaction-market economy, age, education, vote intention) R square</td>
<td>0.14</td>
<td>0.24</td>
<td>0.13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Satisfaction with market economy</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>0.19</td>
<td>0.502</td>
<td>0.19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EXP(B)</td>
<td>1.21</td>
<td>0.60</td>
<td>1.21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sig.</td>
<td>(0.03)</td>
<td>(0.00)</td>
<td>(0.04)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Satisfaction with democracy</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>1.68</td>
<td>1.61</td>
<td>2.29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EXP(B)</td>
<td>5.40</td>
<td>5.02</td>
<td>9.93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sig.</td>
<td>(0.00)</td>
<td>(0.00)</td>
<td>(0.00)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vote intention</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>0.007</td>
<td>0.008</td>
<td>0.009</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EXP(B)</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>0.99</td>
<td>1.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sig.</td>
<td>(0.05)</td>
<td>(0.01)</td>
<td>(0.03)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>-0.0028</td>
<td>0.004</td>
<td>-0.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EXP(B)</td>
<td>0.97</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>0.99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sig.</td>
<td>(0.38)</td>
<td>(0.89)</td>
<td>(0.91)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If vote intention = dependent variable R square</td>
<td>0.16</td>
<td>0.19</td>
<td>0.20</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
What goes against expectations is that satisfaction with democracy and education has no significant impact on party identification. As it can be seen in table 2, the p values are bigger than 0.05 and the regression coefficients of these variables, for predicting the probability of being in the group of those who identify with a party, given all other variables in the model, are really low. Therefore there is no direct effect of education and satisfaction with democracy on party identification. Before identifying with a party, Romanians do not seem to evaluate the political components of the system, but the economic performances of the government in promoting and implementing the principles of market economy. At the same time the more informed and educated they are, the result is not an easy-going attachment to a party but an even more detailed scrutiny of the party and its activities.

Concerning the other variables, the vote intention and satisfaction with market economy have the strongest effect on partisanship. The relationship is highly significant and the regression coefficients are high. As a result, Romanian data did not provide enough evidence against H4. The effect of satisfaction with market economy is positive, meaning that the more satisfied the Romanians were with the economic situation the higher the propensity to have a party that best protects their interests.

In the situation of vote intention treated as possible independent variable, the effect is also positive and strong. There is a direct effect of vote intention on party identification, those who intend to vote in the next elections, seem to have a party identification as compared with the nonvoters. But when treated as a dependent variable the explanatory power of the model for 2002 the R squares are similar and the line of causation cannot clearly be defined. When looking in table 3 at the actual breakdown of vote for parties between identifiers and non-identifiers it appears that more than 40 percent of the non-identifiers would still vote. One possible explanation is that these voters are not attracted by the party program and do not think that the respective party represents their interests, but they do like the party leader as it is obvious in the case of the extreme right Greater Romania Party (PRM).

Table 3. Percentages of voters for parties within identifiers and non-identifiers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Vote</th>
<th>ApR</th>
<th>PD</th>
<th>PSD (PDSR or PSDR)</th>
<th>PNL</th>
<th>PNTcd</th>
<th>PRM</th>
<th>PUR</th>
<th>UDMR</th>
<th>UFD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Identifiers</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0.1%</td>
<td>7.6%</td>
<td>37.5%</td>
<td>3.9%</td>
<td>.9%</td>
<td>11.9%</td>
<td>2.0%</td>
<td>5.5%</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Non-identifiers</strong></td>
<td>0.1%</td>
<td>5.6%</td>
<td>23.4%</td>
<td>2.5%</td>
<td>.6%</td>
<td>7.9%</td>
<td>1.5%</td>
<td>1.4%</td>
<td>.1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* the rest up to 100% on the rows, is represented by the vote for other minor parties.
In 2003, again the difference in the R squares is not that high to draw some final conclusions about the line of causation. Instead what can be reaffirmed is that there is a clear association between the two variables. 73.3 percent of the identifiers have the intention to vote, while 66.1 of the non-identifiers do not show any willingness to participate in elections. By 2004 though, the line of causation inclines from party identification to vote intention since 98 percent of the identifiers declare their vote intention and 81 percent of the non-identifiers as well show readiness to participate in elections. This shows that gradually the vote is cast based on a cognitive evaluation of the party, while there is still some room left for the voters who only like the party leaders.

The second step of the analysis focuses on vote intention in order to test if the other explanatory variables have an impact on it, and whether the impact of education and satisfaction with democracy on party identification goes through vote intention. In this phase the vote intention as a dichotomous variable is treated as the dependent variable and the rest of the variables (except party identification) are treated as independent variables. A direct logistic regression was run to see if there is any direct effect of satisfaction with democracy, satisfaction with market economy, age and education on vote intention.

The predictive power of this model is very, very low, with a value of the R square of 0.020, only 2% of the variance in the vote intention being explained by the variables introduced in the model. Among the explanatory variables introduced only satisfaction with democracy and age have an effect on the vote intention although a small one, since R square is very small. The p level is below 0.05 and the regression coefficients for predicting the probability of being in the group of those who vote are bigger in the case of age and satisfaction with democracy as compared to the rest of the coefficients. As for satisfaction with market economy and education, these two variables do not have a direct effect on vote intention (p value is around 0.593 and 0.961). This logistic regression using the vote intention, as dependent variable did not provide enough evidence to reject the fact that satisfaction with democracy has a positive effect on vote intention (although very, very low) and the same applies for education.

The third step of the analysis checked the relationship between satisfaction with democracy and satisfaction with market economy and the two background variables: age and education. Regressions were employed for satisfaction with democracy and the background variables (age, education) when satisfaction with democracy is the dependent variable and age and education are
independent variables. The same thing is repeated when satisfaction with market economy is the response variable and the background variables are the explanatory ones. Looking at the regression coefficients in the table 6 and 8 (Appendix) given the p values, the data provide us with evidence against the existence of a relation between age and both, satisfaction with democracy and market economy. On the other hand, education shows a very, very low influence on both types of satisfaction. The level of p was close to zero (for education) but what has to be noticed in these two last linear regressions is high value for the standard error of the estimate. This is above 0.90 (Table 5 and 7 Appendix) and the explanation for this may be to the fact that the 2 independent variables (education and age) are correlated with each other.

![Figure 3. Final model](image)

5. Conclusions and further research

What can be concluded from this analysis is that at the beginning of the democratic rule, political parties were not objects of such importance to voters. Most of Romanians did not see the need of having more than one political party until early 2000. Consequently in the context of a post-communist country, it is still important to distinguish between short-term and long-term loyalties because what can be measured in Romania at this time are only short-time preferences. The long-

---

2 The procedure was run separately for satisfaction with democracy and satisfaction with market economy, and none of them was included as an explanatory variable for the other one because the two variables are highly correlated and therefore are treated on the same level in the causal model (r = 0.65)
term loyalty has to be build in time after there is a certain party programmatic consistency and internal party unity. In the absence of long term internal party loyalties as shown by party splits and MPs defecting easily from their party it would be surprising to expect citizens to show long term loyalties towards parties.

In terms of measurement for party identification, the paper has used a question typing a short-term party preference and emphasizing more the cognitive part of party identification seen as an attitude. In order to add the affective component as well, the paper proposes the use of another question, which asks the respondent to ‘feel’ and express his/her attachment towards a certain political orientation. The two measurements go hand in hand in terms of results but they need to be validated against more data which will be soon available. As measured by these questions, the levels of party identification are low and reflect the turmoil existent in the Romanian party system, the high level of fragmentation, the lack of party unity and lack of party programmatic consistency.

Using the results from the all three levels of the analysis what can be concluded is that age and satisfaction with market economy (out of the five independent variables) have a direct effect on party identification. Satisfaction with democracy does not have a direct effect on party identification. The effect of education on both satisfactions with democracy and market economy is very weak and questionable.

The economic situation of the country makes people more attached/less attached to the political parties and this appeared to be the focus of attention for most Romanians after early 1990s. The background variables have a very weak effect, almost negligible in the case of education; therefore education could be even excluded completely from the final model. Age is more “politcized”, having a direct effect on party identification. Older people are more prone to have a party that represents their interests and this is only in few cases related with the participation to vote.

The model shown in figure 3 represents a simplification of the mode in which party identification develops and a reverse line of causation as compared to the US models. Satisfaction with market economy along with age has a direct effect on party identification while the education has an indirect effect via the economic evaluation for the system. Contrary to expectations satisfaction
with democracy does not influence the development of party identification, but on the contrary it affects the vote intentions.

As far as the relation between party identification and vote preference is concerned, things have evolved by 2004 towards a line of causation pointing to vote intention. The vote has gradually became more informed and in most of the cases backed by a party identification and not as in the early 1990s, when votes have been expressed in order to get reed of the ex-communists, to support a favorite political leader or a single issue. The data presented and the analysis is far for producing a generalization about this evolution but the test should be repeated on more data and with more explanatory factors included in the model.

References:


Appendix:

**Abbreviation List**

ApR- Alianta pentru Romania – The Alliance for Romania

PUNR- Partidul Unitatii Nationale Romane- Party of Romanian National Unity

PD- Partidul Democrat- Democrat Party

PSD- Partidul Social Democrat- Social Democrat Party

PNL-Partidul National Liberal- National Liberal Party

PNTcd- Partidul National Taranesc Crestin si Democrat

PRM-Partidul Romania Mare- Great Romania Party

PUR- Partidul Umanist Roman- The Humanist Party
UDMR- Uniunea Democrată a Maghiarilor din România- Hungarian Democratic Alliance of Romania
UFD – Uniunea Forțelor de Dreapta- Right-Wing Forces Union

Table 5. Model Summary for linear regression

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Model</th>
<th>R</th>
<th>R Square</th>
<th>Adjusted R Square</th>
<th>Std. Error of the Estimate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>.086</td>
<td>.007</td>
<td>.006</td>
<td>.9902</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

a Predictors: (Constant), last school attended and age; dependent variable- satisfaction with democracy

Table 6. Coefficients for the linear regression in table 5

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Model</th>
<th>Unstandardized Coefficients</th>
<th>Standardized Coefficients</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>std. Error</td>
<td>Beta</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Constant)</td>
<td>2.510</td>
<td>.092</td>
<td>27.393</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>-5.350E-02</td>
<td>.029</td>
<td>-.043</td>
<td>-1.850</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>last school attended</td>
<td>3.180E-02</td>
<td>.011</td>
<td>.065</td>
<td>2.801</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

a Dependent Variable: satisfaction with democracy

Table 7. Model Summary

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Model</th>
<th>R</th>
<th>R Square</th>
<th>Adjusted R Square</th>
<th>Std. Error of the Estimate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>.067</td>
<td>.004</td>
<td>.003</td>
<td>.9339</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

a Predictors: (Constant), last school attended and age; dependent variable: satisfaction with market economy;

Table 8. Coefficients for linear regression

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Model</th>
<th>Unstandardized Coefficients</th>
<th>Standardized Coefficients</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>std. Error</td>
<td>Beta</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Constant)</td>
<td>2.203</td>
<td>.087</td>
<td>25.240</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>-2.573E-02</td>
<td>.028</td>
<td>-.022</td>
<td>-.925</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>last school attended</td>
<td>2.683E-02</td>
<td>.011</td>
<td>.058</td>
<td>2.467</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

a Dependent Variable: satisfaction with market economy