The Rise and Fall of the Extreme Right in Romania: different paths followed by the Greater Romania Party and the Party of National Unity of Romanians

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What makes an extreme right party more successful than another one in terms of persistence and electoral success if they operate in the same environment and compete for the same kind of voters? Is the success of an extreme right party closely related to its organizational characteristics? What is the relation between party incumbency and government aspiration on the one side and party organizational change on the other side?

In Eastern Europe, the extreme right parties after 1990 were in the process of institutionalization and incumbency is expected to have a beneficial effect on extreme right parties, contributing to their stabilization (Harmel and Svåsand 1993), provided that the participation in government does not occur too early. As van Biezen (2003) emphasizes in new democracies, in the context of a weak party institutionalization and weak party loyalties, entering the government in early phases may have destabilizing effects for the parties. Therefore appears as necessity for these parties to build organizational mechanisms that can help maintaining the party unity, especially if they become incumbent or have a government aspiration.

The Romanian context appears attractive from the point of view of the evolution of extreme right parties, where two extreme right parties flourished after 1990: The Greater Romania Party (GRP) and the Party of National Unity of Romanians (PUNR). The question that arises is why only one of them succeeded and the other one had failed?

In 1994-1996 both parties settled a political alliance with FDSN (Democratic Front of National Salvation) in order to support the functioning of the government conducted by Nicolae Vacaroiu. PUNR was the only party who received ministerial positions and participated in government for almost two years. But paradoxically, while one would expect this party to strengthen its position, it was precisely this party that almost disappeared after 2000 and one of its factions merged with the Greater Romania Party in 1998. The question therefore becomes why the party which experienced
incumbency became insignificant, while its counterpart, which was not part of the government became very successful especially after 2000?

Among the two parties, it was mainly the Greater Romania Party that manifested a declared intention to enter the government after 1996. PUNR, with its leader more involved in the public administration- as the mayor of Cluj-Napoca from 1992, didn’t have a strong government aspiration in the early 1990s. But given its size in the parliament after the 1992 elections, the party has received the proposal to join the government only in 1994, in order to sustain the existing cabinet. The question that the paper will try to answer is what was the effect of the incumbency (PUNR) and of government aspiration (GRP) for the party organization and how is this related with the evolution of the two parties (success or failure)?

The aim of the present analysis is to find a possible answer for the above mentioned questions looking at the evolution of the two parties from the 1990s until the present. The paper will compare the parties and will focus more on the organizational part. The structure of the paper has the following sections: the first will provide a short theoretical framework under which the paper operates, the second section will explore the institutionalization process followed by the two cases and the third will analyze recent developments, investigating whether, in the case of the Greater Romania Party, government aspiration lead/is leading to party organizational change.

The evidence that the paper is bringing is that the incumbency period contributed to party factionalization in the case of PUNR, lead to party “deinstitutionalization”, and consequently to PUNR failure after 2000. As far as GRP is concerned, the institutionalization process is under way of completing and entering the government in 2004 is the next goal of the party. What “government aspiration” brought in terms of party change for GRP is more a discourse change, which is likely to determine now a more intensive organizational change than before 2001.

1 The Greater Romania Party (GRP) – Partidul Romania Mare (GRP); The Party of National Unity of Romanians (PUNR)-Partidul
I. Analytical framework and case selection

- The link between party success, incumbency and party organization

The concepts of party failure and party success can be regarded as ambiguous and different meanings can be attributed to both. One understanding of party failure can be that its organization has ceased to exist (Mackie and Rose 1988: 533), in this sense party failure means “failure to survive as measured by organizational death.” (Harmel 2003: 9)

On the other side, party success can be perceived as the fact that the party persists, continues to compete in elections and sends its representatives to parliament, as a minimal criterion for success. But the concept of success can have other meanings, such as achieving the party’s “programmatic or ideological goals” (Mackie and Rose 1988: 533). If a party’s major goal is to win elections, then from this point of view, party success is synonymous with having achieved the desired level of popular support. But if party’s goal is to pursue a policy goal, then remaining very determined on its ideological/policy positions, even at the cost of gaining few votes in the elections can be regarded also a success, but more from the inside-party point of view. For extreme right parties, which were usually marginalized, getting into the government coalition may be regarded as a “victory” if this was the party’s goal. But as the Eastern European experience shows, some parties may enter the government at a stage when they are not prepared and this accomplishment may not always turn to represent a success for the party in the long run. Apart from incumbency, the parties may choose another strategy, to deliberately stay in opposition or only to support the government party in the legislature. In time these strategies may prove to be electorally more attractive than incumbency alternative. (Rose & Mackie 1982)

For the purposes of this paper, success and failure are defined using two criteria: sequential electoral performance, which allows gaining seats in Parliament and party organization persistence. As Mackie and Rose (1988) discover in their empirical study, the two criteria go hand in hand: success in electoral competition is associated with the likelihood of organizational persistence at least in the Western European context. Considering these criteria, the Greater Romania Party (GRP)
can be considered as a successful party, while the Party of the National Unity of Romanians (PUNR) has failed to succeed. In 1998 PUNR experienced a split and what remained out of it formed a new party (National Alliance), which in 2000 did not enter the parliament and moreover it ended its activity in 2002.\footnote{The party didn’t disappear completely, at least for a long time. Provided that the National Alliance was not a good solution, PUNR started again its activity at the end of 2002. It registered again as a political party, using the same}

In order to respond to the question why GRP succeeded while PUNR failed, the paper will look at the evolution of the party, analyzing the incumbency period of PUNR and taking into account the context of party institutionalization. The whole Romanian party system was in the period of institutionalization in the 1990s. Parties, which were not completely institutionalized, were already part of the government, and this was the case of PUNR in the 1994-1996 period.

As mentioned in the party literature that links party success and party incumbency, participation in government is supposed to affect parties’ career in a positive manner. Mackie and Rose (1988: 555) find that the parties which are often in government, are less likely to fail, but as the authors mention, “parties in government do not maintain sufficient agreement on the rewards of office to remain completely intact” and their results show, that out of 195 parties from 19 Western European nations, 55\% are persisting intact in what the party organization is concerned and only 23\% disappear. But the mentioned research was conducted only for Western European parties, parties that have already finished the institutionalization period and have participated in at least three elections.

In the present paper I consider a party as incumbent when it is a part of the government, and as a consequence it is supposed to influence public policy. Most of the party elite should also be incorporated in the state structures. In 1994, PUNR was included in the government in order to sustain FDSN (Democratic Front of National Salvation) with which the party signed a political protocol. The same political agreement but only for support in the Parliament was signed by the GRP on 20\textsuperscript{th} of January 1995, but GRP did not receive any ministerial position, as compared to PUNR. Greater Romania Party offered support in Parliament and in exchange it received some administrative positions inside government. Given these specifications it is justifiable to consider
only one of the two extreme-right parties as being incumbent: PUNR, while GRP was just a supporting party, and for a very short period of time (8 months).

As far the organization of the new extreme right populist parties is concerned, the literature on the topic lists some characteristics that should apply to these parties: charismatic leadership, small and selective centralized organizational pattern (Kitschelt 1995, Taagart 1995). For an extreme right party to be successful a strong charismatic leader is needed, a leader capable to set the direction that the party is following, a leader that can control the party and its members (Betz 1998, Panebianco 1988, Pedahzur and Brichta 2002). Kitschelt (1995) emphasizes that the new extreme right parties are organized in a modern framework with professional managers in their staff. As far as the bureaucratic chain is concerned, different opinions are present in the literature. One opinion is that because of the lack of a clear bureaucratic chain in the party, appears the danger of factional battles inside the parties. (Kitschelt 1995: 32) The other argument is that, precisely because of the lack of bureaucratic structure inside the party and the presence of a strong discipline within the parties, factions will be avoided and the party can easily change its issue position if this is perceived to contribute to votes or office. (Betz 1998: 9) But again this framework for analyzing party organization of the new extreme right was developed for Western European new populist parties that appeared in established democracies.

Recent studies, which focus on party organization in Southern-Eastern Europe (van Biezen 2003: 218-219), have found no major difference in the organizational styles, compared with the Western patterns. No new types of party were found, and the differences that could be noticed were “in degree rather than in kind”. The only major difference that could be noticed was the balance of power that in Eastern Europe is more directed toward extra-parliamentary executive. The explanation is that in most East European parties there is an overlap between the extra-executive party and the party in public office, the former usually being included in the first. This is one of the reasons why drawing conclusions which take into account the three faces of the party: “party on the ground”, “party in public office” and “the party central office” (Mair 1994), is not appropriate for Eastern Europe.

acronyms (PUNR) but the name is different now: The Party of the Unity of the Romanian Nation and not The Party of
As far as the two Romanian cases are concerned, the analysis will look for the above mentioned features and will analyze the changes that occurred within party organization in the 1990-2003 period in trying to find explanations for the main questions. In the third section of the paper Harmel’s (2002) framework will be used, with the main focus on the type of change (complexity, magnitude, efficiency, distribution of power and representation) and the intensiveness and extensiveness of change.

What is important for the analysis of the Eastern European extreme-right parties in the 1990s is the context in which the two parties were operating from the point of view of party organization: *party institutionalization*. Institutionalization represents the process by which “organizations and procedures acquire value and stability” (Huntington 1965: 394), and, specifically in the case of a political party, it means that “the party is reified in the public mind so that ‘the party’ exists as a social organization apart from its momentary leaders, and this organization demonstrates recurring patterns of behavior valued by those who identify with it” (Janda 1970: 88). The more routine exits in terms of procedures and the distribution of power and resources, the more institutionalized the organization is (Harmel 2003: 14). Institutionalization is a precondition of party persistence and usually only an insignificant part of those that succeed in becoming institutionalized disappear. In order to become institutionalized, the party has to contest elections nation wide and to create the organizational apparatus for this purpose, and has to continue nominating candidates in successive elections (Mackie and Rose 1988). As far as the time span needed in order to complete the process, 4-5 elections are needed (“roughly 15-20 years) (Harmel and Svåsand 1993: 70). Therefore for the Eastern European political parties in the 1990s (not only for the extreme right) the definition of success can be approximated in terms of institutionalization completion.

The theory developed by Harmel and Svåsand (1993) on the phases of party institutionalization took as a unit of analysis the “entrepreneurial issue party” (EI parties) and proposed three phases for the process: identification, organization and stabilization. Although the theory does not mention the environment in which these parties function, from the study cases that are presented, it is clear that the three phases of institutionalization should work for the “EI parties” that flourished in Western Europe. These parties are already functioning in a stable democracy and in a party system that is

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*National Unity of Romanians*, as before.
already institutionalized. The present paper will try to apply the framework developed by Harmel and Svåsand and see its relevance for the Eastern European context, specifically Romania. The starting difference is that in the Eastern European context, not only these extreme-right parties had to follow the institutionalization period, but the entire party system. According to the theory, in the third stage of the institutionalization process, the party should be ready to enter the government and the other parties should regard it as a viable coalition partner. Therefore, after the incumbency period, the party should be considered an institutionalized party, although institutionalization can happen even if the party does not participate in government.

The Eastern European context is different in the sense that some of the parties entered the government in the early 1990s, without having even the identification and the organization period finished. Furthermore, in the early 1990s all parties began the institutionalization period. As the authors mention, there may be an overlap between some of the phases, but as the East European experience shows, there is more overlap than distinct sequential phases. Considering the distinction between the three phases, the first one (identification) should end after the party has attracted attention on its and spread the message through its leader. The second phase should start when the party concentrates its attention towards attracting electoral support in many constituencies, building an organization and managing with the possible factional battles. The indicator for this phase is the number of party parliamentary representatives who should be more than a “handful” or the same situation should occur for the local representatives. In the third phase the party must take further what was already achieved and more than that, to prove that is a reliable coalition partner or a “worthy” opponent. At the beginning of this phase, the possibility of being invited to join the coalition government is taken seriously by the party or by the other parties (Harmel and Svåsand 1993: 72-73). As the authors argue, each phase requires specific leadership characteristics and overlap between the phases will complicate the situation.

What needs to be mentioned here is the distinction between EI parties and charismatic parties. EI parties are a type of charismatic parties (Harmel and Svåsand 1993: 67-68) and their distinguishing feature is the strong policy position on a specific issue. While for the charismatic party the leader is the party message, the EI parties can change their leaders because the party policy position has the same appeal as the leader is having for the charismatic party.
Case selection

The two extreme right parties that the present paper is focusing upon (The Greater Romania Party and the Party of National Unity of Romanians) operate in the same environment, post-communist Romania and are both considered as belonging to the extreme right party family, although the differences from the Western European extreme right parties must be considered as well.

Both cases integrate in the framework of extreme right parties in terms of ideology. In order to be labeled 'extreme right' the party ideology must exhibit at least one feature from each of the two dimensions: “ingroup-outgroup” (nationalism, ethnocentrism, racism, xenofobia) and “hierarchical” dimension (authoritarianism, antidemocracy) (Meijerink, Mudde and van Holsteyn 1998). The two parties employ at least one of the features of the two dimensions, this - as the authors state- being the condition for falling under the heading of extreme right parties.

Both parties manifest high levels of nationalism, if one understands nationalism as the political doctrine asserting the congruence of the state and the nation, and also nationalism in the sense of a major loyalty of the individual to the state. GRP’s statute 2001 stresses the importance of “national interests accomplishment … completion of national unity, territorial integrity, sovereignty and independence ideals”, while nation and country are very important words, written with capital letters in some parts of the party statute and party program. The Romanian nation is the surrounding space involving individuals’ life. PUNR’s program expresses support for the existence of nation states, especially the Romanian one, the nation state being the proper environment for individual development. National unity is the main idea in the party doctrine and the historical unification from 1918 represents the corollary of Romanian statehood.

As far as ethnocentrism is concerned, a discrimination of the in-group in favor of the out-group, is manifested by both parties, if one looks at the party discourse which is completely different in this aspect from the parties’ programs. Still the number of the out-groups is bigger for Greater Romania Party (Roma, Jews, Hungarians, and sometimes Chinese, Arabs). PUNR has Hungarians as its main

3 Art. 1, 2 from GRP’s Party Statute, 2001.
target. The in-group is of course, the Romanian nation and its values, which has always “belonged” to Europe.

Xenofobia, manifested as the fear of aliens, is presented in both party discourses. As mentioned, the targets of the two parties are clearly determined, only that Greater Romania Party has a wider range of “aliens” that the party does not like. Both party programs exhibit authoritarian features, like emphasis on discipline, authority, with a clear emphasis on the idea of “law and order”. Before the 1996 elections, Vadim Tudor, GRP’s leader, promised two years of authoritarian rule in Romania, provided that his party won the elections.

Whether these extreme right parties belong to the charismatic type of parties or to the EI category, Greater Romania Party is a charismatic party, its leader, Vadim Tudor being the party’s message. PUNR instead is more difficult to classify as a charismatic party from the outset. The party was the expression of a cultural movement appeared in 1990 and it did not have charismatic leaders from the beginning. But the party had a clear goal of defending the national unity and to eliminate any force that would endanger it.

The next section of the paper will apply the institutionalization framework to the Romanian extreme-right parties. The section has the aim of responding to the question why GRP is on the road towards completing the process of institutionalization, while PUNR went toward “deinstitutionalization”. Moreover the purpose is to see what the role of the incumbency period was in this process.

II. Phases of Institutionalization: Greater Romania Party and PUNR compared

The puzzle that appears is why GRP completed the institutionalization period and after the 2000 election became very successful, while PUNR, which had an incumbency period, did not complete the institutionalization period, and, moreover, after two years of incumbency (as a coalition partner) the party experienced a split. The remaining faction formed another party, which after the 2000 elections became insignificant. In the PUNR case, it seems that incumbency lead to deinstitutionalization of the party, but other alternative explanations must also be taken into consideration.
Identification

PUNR begun its legal existence on 15\textsuperscript{th} of March 1990, in Brasov, one of the Transylvanian cities and was the political expression of Cultural Union-Vatra Romaneasca (Stoica 2000:76). The union, formed at the beginning of 1990, was a reaction to UDMR’s appearance (Democratic Alliance of Hungarians in Romania - Uniunea Democrată a Maghiarilor din România). In its initial name the party had also the location specified “from Transilvania” but after two months it changed the name and remained only PUNR- The Party of National Unity of Romanians. The name change was made with the purpose of avoiding the regional character of the party.

At the beginning, in 1990, the party did not have a charismatic leader, but its message was quite clear and in this way succeeded in attracting attention. The first two leaders of the party were not that important, but the important personage in the party was Gheorghe Funar, who, already in 1992, without holding the party chair, was a candidate for presidency in the national elections and was the third candidate in the contest, winning 10,88% of the votes. Gheorghe Funar was the charismatic leader that the party needed and at the same time has been the mayor of Cluj-Napoca - one of the biggest Transilvanian cities - constantly since 1992. The message promoted by the party was clearly nationalistic - the party’s main target was to keep national integrity and to add to the actual Romanian state, the old provinces, which are not part of the state (i.e. Moldova). Gheorghe Funar knew how to attract attention towards himself and the party and used as the main target the Hungarian population. Being mayor in a city with a substantial Hungarian population (20%) and the party leader from 1992, Funar used many strategies to impose the “traditional values” of the Romanian nation. Some distinctive signs of the city are: national flags everywhere, national flag colors painted on the benches, garbage baskets, plus boards in the city center reminding sections from the Romanian constitution (i.e. “the official national language is the Romanian language”), and all these serve as a message for the Hungarian population of Cluj.

GRP started its activity one year later than PUNR, in 1991, and it had from the beginning a charismatic leader (Corneliu Vadim Tudor), who had the requisite skills to attract attention and to promote the party message. The party advocates ultra-nationalistic principles, anti-Hungarian sentiments and combines fascist and communist elements. Its orientation towards (re)unification
with Moldova is one of GRP’s main electoral selling points. In the same line with PUNR, GRP program stated that the Romanian nation is one of the most ancient civilizations in Europe and that the Romanians distinguish themselves by their native genius, their talents and qualities. The party program is called “National Doctrine as a Synthetic Expression of a Multimillenary Existence of Romanians”. Following the same idea of the national specific and the danger represented by UDMR, but with a much more radical position than PUNR, GRP was created by the editors of “Greater Romania Magazine” (Stoica 2000: 66). The magazine had a wide coverage and Corneliu Vadim Tudor, the leader, used to participate in all the populist events in Transilvania.

The political program of the two parties does not specify any element against other nations but the leaders’ discourse was enough to distinguish the ethnocentrism and xenophobic elements. GRP’s leader, Corneliu Vadim Tudor, when speaking about the Hungarian population often used to apply the term migratory population, but as mentioned, besides the Hungarian population, the targets were Jews, Gypsies, and only occasionally Arabs and Chinese. While for GRP the aliens were more diversified, in the case of PUNR, the Hungarians were the main, and most of the time, the only target.

**Table 1. Party Age and Party leaders**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Party</th>
<th>Party age</th>
<th>Number of leaders</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>GRP</td>
<td>13 years</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Staring activity: 20th of June 1991;</td>
<td>Corneliu Vadim Tudor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PUNR</td>
<td>10 years</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
|       | Starting activity: 15th of March 1990; | Constantin Ivaciuc (March-June 1990)  
|       | End of Activity: 9th of September 2000 | Alexandru Ioan Crisan (June 1990-May 1991)  
|       |       | Radu Ceontea (May 1991-October 1992)  
|       |       | Gheorghe Funar (October 1992-March 1997)  
|       |       | Valeriu Tabara (March 1997-September 2000) |


- **Organization**

The organization phase is clear for Greater Romania Party, but as far as PUNR is concerned this phase overlapped with the third one because of the party inclusion in the 1994 governing coalition. What is important in the second stage is the delegation of some of the leader’s authority, development of the organization at the local level, developing strategies for party growth and
building consensus inside the party. The MPs who represent the party should increase in number or the same phenomenon should happen but at the local level. (Harmel and Svåsand 1993: 74)

Table 2. Electoral fortunes by election year:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>PUNR</td>
<td>2.1%</td>
<td>7.7%</td>
<td>4.4%</td>
<td>1.4%*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GRP</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>3.9%</td>
<td>4.5%</td>
<td>19.5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sources: www.parties-and-elections.de and www.cdep.ro last accessed 12.03.2004; * electoral result of the

As table 2 shows, PUNR was already a popular party by the 1992 elections, when it sent to the Parliament 30 deputies and 14 senators. This was already a big number of party representatives and the party started to develop its network at the local level. Table 3 indicates the distribution of the party’s mandates according to the region. The difference between the two parties in constructing the local organizations at the national level is quite obvious. Even with a lower number of MPs, GRP succeeded in having a relatively uniform distribution of the mandates all over the country. The electoral fortunes of the party were evenly distributed all over the regions, while PUNR during all three elections remained with its main supporters in Transilvania. Gheorghe Funar- the party leader until 1997- conducted his activity most of the time in Cluj (as city mayor), even if the main quarters of the party were moved to Bucuresti in 1992.

As far as the leader’s skills, for the second stage of party development, he/she should be a good organizer, capable of consensus building and well endowed for possible strategies that the party should follow in order to build its electoral support. (Harmel and Svåsand 1993: 75) **Gheorghe Funar**, PUNR’s leader was obviously a charismatic leader, he managed to win three consecutive mandates for the city hall in Cluj-Napoca and voters in Transilvania regarded him as a good leader and organizer. But since most of his activities were run in Transilvania, the party did not manage to extend its organizational basis all over the country and one possible indicator is the poor electoral results in the regions, except Transilvania. On the contrary, **Corneliu Vadim Tudor**, the charismatic leader was able to organize the party, to build consensus among the members and to
Table 3. The distribution of party mandates by region

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Party/Region</th>
<th>TRANSILVANIA</th>
<th>MOLDOVA</th>
<th>MUNTENIA AND OLTENIA</th>
<th>DOBROGEA</th>
<th>BANAT</th>
<th>BUCURESTI</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Year</td>
<td>‘90 ‘92 ‘96 ‘00</td>
<td>‘90 ‘92 ‘96 ‘00</td>
<td>‘90 ‘92 ‘96 ‘00</td>
<td>‘90 ‘92 ‘96 ‘00</td>
<td>‘90 ‘92 ‘96 ‘00</td>
<td>‘90 ‘92 ‘96 ‘00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PUNR</td>
<td>11 36 19 -</td>
<td>- 3 - -</td>
<td>- 1 4 -</td>
<td>- 1 1 -</td>
<td>- 1 - -</td>
<td>- 2 1 -</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GRP</td>
<td>- 4 2 25</td>
<td>- 5 7 19</td>
<td>- 9 9 30</td>
<td>- 2 1 8</td>
<td>- 4 10</td>
<td>- 1 3 6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

contribute to the party growth over the years. Not only did he prove to be a charismatic and authoritarian leader, but also his strategies helped the party to survive and to become more and more successful with each election.

For PUNR the second stage of institutionalization is overlapping with the third one because of the incumbency period 1994-1996. PUNR had four ministerial positions in the cabinet and quite important ones: agriculture, justice, transportation and telecommunications. Considering the party size in Parliament (44 MPs) and the incumbency period (even only for 2 years), and the number of leaders, one would have expected PUNR to stabilize as a party and to finish the institutionalization. As Harmel and Svåsand argue, different phases require different leaders’ skills, and as PUNR changed them frequently, one may hypothesize that this could have helped the party completing the institutionalization. But the problem was not only the weak organization of the party across the regions but the emergence of factionalism. Funar was not able to keep the party ministers disciplined and he was not strong enough to impose his point of view inside the party anymore. In July 1996 during the National Council meetings, Funar proposed to maintain the alliance with PDSR, while the party’s minister – Valeriu Tabara, postulated a better reorientation of the party towards the Ecologist Romanian Movement and Romanian Social Democratic Party. Funar proposal did not hold, and in September 1996, two months before the legislative elections, the party withdrew from the government protesting against the Romanian-Hungarian treaty signed in that period. The electoral scores of the party went down in the elections held in November 1996. The percentage of votes declined to 4.33% for the Chamber of Deputies and the number of MPs decreased to 25.

The dissension inside the party materialized with the election of Valeriu Tabara as the new party leader in March 1997. Leadership and strategical factionalism lead to the party disruption one-year after the incumbency period. Valeriu Tabara was not the charismatic leader compared with Funar. The latter left the party in November 1997 and his faction joined The Greater Romania Party one year after the split.

Even if factionalism in post-communist countries may be regarded as a positive sign of interest pluralism, in the period of party institutionalization, party factionalism appears as a form of behavior that creates, perpetuates or enhances instability and undermines the process of party
institutionalization. (Lewis 1995: 107) Moreover, if incumbency period occurs at the early stage of institutionalization, and if factionalism is not handled by strong party discipline, the result can be disastrous for the party and PUNR is a good example. When a party enters the government, the relationship between the party “faces” change in being more complex, since the party in public office becomes divided between party in government and party in parliament. The incumbency period at the early stage of party development had proved to have destabilizing consequences for PUNR. The party was not prepared for all this development and had not built in time mechanisms that could maintain party unity. “The party in government” became quite influential and started to challenge the extra-parliamentary party. PUNR is an example that runs counter to what van Biezen (2003) discovers as being a possible pattern of party organization in Eastern Europe, with the predominance of extra-parliamentary executive. For PUNR extra-parliamentary party executive was not a part of the parliamentary party and as the events show, it is not the extra-parliamentary and the party executive that was most powerful, but the party in government.

PUNR organization, as stated in the 1990 party statute, article 24, was based on a territorial basis, with units at the level of counties and the capital, plus subunits in each town and rural area. The internal organs which managed the organization of the party at the central level were The National Convention, National Council, Permanent Bureau and The National Commission of Censors. The most powerful body was the National Convention composed of local delegates, senators and deputies of the party and which used to hold sessions every two years. As compared with Greater Romania Party, PUNR’s organization is looser in terms of complexity and centralization, with not so much emphasis on the party leader and his attributions. Instead the Greater Romania Party from the beginning started with a centralized way of organization. The party structure was complex (at least on paper) from the start, with the party Congress as the major party organ which had sessions every 4 years. The Congress adopts the party statute, party program and party strategy, elects the party leader and the other party organs (National Council, Central Commission for Coordination and Central Commission for financial control). Between Congresses, party activity is assured by the National Council, which elects the Executive Committee. It is the National Council that establishes the party strategy and approves the annual budget. The Executive Committee is the executive organ of the National Council which coordinates the activity of the local units, elaborates norms and instructions, negotiates political alliances and mergers with other parties and validates the lists of party candidates for
the Parliament. Besides all these structures, there is a Permanent Bureau as well, which holds weekly sessions.

A distinct feature in the GRP’s party statute is that the party leader controls everything, and he is the head of all the above mentioned organizational structures. Having this complex and well specified structure from the beginning and keeping all the decisions at the central level, Vadim Tudor was able to keep the party united. He is actually the party and without him the party would quickly vanish. Since 1992 Vadim is a party MP and therefore in GRP case, the party executive was always a part of the party in public office. GRP fits the organizational pattern presented by van Biezen (2003) with a dominance of the party executive over the party in public office, and as she mentions, this organizational aspect can be regarded as a disciplinary measure employed by the parties in Eastern Europe. The fact that the party executive is always a part of the party in public office helps the party central leadership to control the party MPs and to maintain the party united. This element was not present in the case of PUNR’s organization. The party chair was, most of the time, in Transilvania, running the city hall of Cluj-Napoca and this weakened the control over the ministers and the party’s MPs. Moreover, the party statute did not have from the beginning strong powers attributed to the party leader.

Table 4. Evolution of party members

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>PUNR</td>
<td>21176</td>
<td>49000</td>
<td>40000</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GRP</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>25000</td>
<td>32000</td>
<td>55000-10000</td>
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</tr>
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The evolution of party members shows no big differences between the two parties until 1996. PUNR started with more members in the early 1990s, but GRP grew much more after 1998. After the PUNR faction having Funar as its leader merged with GRP in 1998, Funar became the General Secretary of GRP. The merger is a sign that Corneliu Vadim Tudor knew how to contribute to the growth of his party. If until 1998 they were not so mush friends and they were competing for more or less the same voters, in 1998 Funar became the Vadim’s “right-hand”.

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4 GRP statute, 1997.
The latest GRP public declarations state that the party has around 250,000 members, a number, which seems to be quite large.

- **Stabilization**

  The merger between GRP and Funar faction from PUNR seemed to have electoral benefits because after the election year 2000, GRP became the second largest party in the Parliament after The Social Democrat Party. Besides vote pooling, the merger facilitated resource mobilization and, moreover, it pooled legislative votes, improving GRP access to committee positions and staffing resources. The Greater Romania Party started the stabilization period after 1996 elections. The party leader was publicly declaring that the party is ready to be part of the government, but the problem was that none of the other parties were disposed to enter in a coalition with an extreme right party. Given the international political pressure, the alternative of an extremist party in the Romanian government was excluded if Romania wanted to join the Euro-Atlantic structures. The leader has remained the same since 1991, proved to have administrative skills and starting from the end of 2003 tried to build a personal reputation of a credible and reliable ‘future’ coalition partner.

  What GRP misses is a reliable account of governing ability. By 2004, the party has sufficient longevity (13 years) and is sufficiently routinized in its internal structure. The conclusion in the case of GRP is that the party slowly followed the institutionalization phases and is very close to the end of the process. It had participated in 4 consecutive elections and has been particularly successful in the last one. The next aim of the party is to enter government. GRP is the example of a charismatic extreme right party, which is on the way to complete the institutionalization period. Its leader had the requested skills for all three institutionalization phases and no replacement of him was needed. Rather, a leader change would have led to the collapse of the party.

  Contrary to GRP development, PUNR did not complete the institutionalization period. The second phase of organization did overlap with the third stage, because the party entered the coalition government (1994) at a stage when more organization was required given the increased parliamentary size of the party by 1992. As Harmel and Svåsand (1993) point out, it is in the third stage (when the party is considered a potential coalition partner) that the institutionalization process should be completed, but the process followed by PUNR was
reversed. Not only the phases occurring simultaneously complicated the situation concerning the leader’s required skills, but it led to the party collapse. The disruption has manifested by the party split in 1998 and the lamentable electoral results in 2000 of the newly formed National Alliance (by the merger of the remaining PUNR and National Romanian Party).

The two cases analyzed in the present paper suggest that an extreme right party (GRP) can be successful and towards completing its institutionalization if it has a strong powerful leader and a centralized way of decision making and a strong party discipline. In the institutionalization context, GRP success demonstrates that is better for an extreme right party not to enter the government and to postpone this for latter, when the pay-off for the party will be greater. On the contrary, PUNR failure to finish the institutionalization process and the party failure prove that incumbency at an early phase of development may lead to a disaster if the party lacks a strong leader and disciplinary measures that could keep the party united. Therefore incumbency at an early phase of the development of an extreme right party should be accompanied by strong organizational measures (imposed discipline, centralization of decision making and strong charismatic leader).

In the Eastern European context, for the majority of the parties which formed the government at the early stages, all the 3 phases of institutionalization are overlapping and it would be interesting to see what the factors were that contributed to the survival and strengthening of some parties or the failure of others which at the beginning of 1990s entered the government. Is it the case that only the extreme right parties can collapse if the phases are overlapping and if the leadership skills are not the needed ones? Or is it the case that PUNR is an exception and the incumbency period is leading in the majority of cases to the completion of institutionalization? These are questions that should be addressed in a further research of the party institutionalization in Eastern Europe.

The present paper cannot make a generalization about the negative effect of the incumbency period on the success of extreme right parties as happened in the case of PUNR. As presented, the lack of a strong leader and strong disciplinary rules, incumbency period led to leadership and strategical factionalism, factors that contributed to the party collapse. The party was not able to adapt to the incumbency period and benefit from it because it was not ready for it in the first place. But other aspects have to be considered as well. First of all the incumbency period was short (only 2 years) and it came in a period when the party was completing its organization over
the regions. Secondly, one may say that low electoral support in the 1996 elections contributed to the party split in 1998, but the electoral results of PUNR and GRP in 1996 were very similar, and GRP followed the institutionalization process successfully.

III. Recent developments: Greater Romania Party - government aspiration and organizational change?

The Greater Romania Party has affirmed its strong commitment towards being a part of the government since 1996. But at that time none of the important Romanian parties considered such an option and the party continued to be marginalized. The government party and the opposition tried many times to remove the parliamentarian immunity from Vadim Tudor, given his declarations and behavior inside the legislature. The situation was the same after the 2000 elections, even if the party is currently the second regarding its size in parliament. At the end of 2003, there was even advanced a proposal (“2003 Initiative”) for the Government to declare GRP illegal.5

The purpose of the present section is to investigate if government aspiration lead to change in the organization of GRP. Given the sources available, the type of party organizational change (complexity, magnitude, and distribution of power) will be explored. Besides this, the intensiveness (if the change in the organization was smaller or greater) and extensiveness (smaller or greater number of aspects changed) of change (Harmel 2002: 138), if there was any, will be investigate. If party change is purposeful, then the goal of being part of the government can be associated with party change.

Change in the party rules and party structures are investigated using the party statutes from 1997, 2001 and interviews conducted with local GRP party activists in March 2004. Comparing the party statutes the observed trend is toward more complexity. The number of levels (village, town, county, central level) and the number of units concerning the organization remained the same, but what has been a change is the increased number and variety of tasks performed by the organizational structures at each level. The organization and its tasks at the local level is much more clearly specified in 2001 compared with 1997. The County Conference is the superior structure at the local level with sessions every 4 years. It has an Extraordinary Conference that is gathering every 2 years. There is a County Council as well, which elects the Executive Bureau
(art. 50-54). At the level of towns and villages the party has the purpose to constitute “primary local branches” with a minimum of 10-5 members, and when the number is smaller than 5, the party aim is to constitute “party groups” (art. 57, 2001). The 2001 party statute contains more sections, even one about party sympathizers and one about internal “party democracy”. One special task of the National Council is to establish the strategy of GRP participation in government (art. 74.(3), 2001).

Concerning the distribution of power, the party structures persist but some of the attributions are changed. GRP has always been a centralized party with a strong leadership and as the latest statute shows, the trend is towards even more centralization. The leader’s attributions are as strong as before, the nomination of candidates follows the same procedure with the final word at the central level (Executive Committee). But in what the distribution of resources is concerned, it is not anymore the National Council that passes the annual party budget, but the decision is made at the top in the Executive Committee. The only task that is relaxed and transferred to a lower level is the approval of political alliances and mergers, now at the National Council level, while previously the decision was made only in the Executive Committee. Access to the top decision making positions was restricted only for members who already have three years of membership in the party, and the provision entered into force in 2002 (art. 63 (4), 2001). In terms of decision making, experts placed GRP in 2003 as the most centralized party from the Romanian political spectrum, with a score of 4.68 on a scale of 5 points, where 5 was the maximum score (Grecu Razvan et. al 2003).

As for the extensiveness and intensiveness of change, the score that can be attributed to these dimensions is low. There was a small change in organizational complexity and in the decision-making procedure and these were only two dimensions of party change that was possible to analyze. The changes were not radical and were only slight modifications of a situation that already existed.

In addition to this, what is unexpected in the evolution of the Greater Romania Party is the change in the leader’s discourse. Corneliu Vadim Tudor transformed himself from a radical to a moderate leader, with a completely new position towards Jews, Hungarians and so on. As the public declarations of the leader reveal, and the party’s website, Vadim Tudor seems to be a new

5 According to the Romanian Low on Political Parties, the only organs that can declare a party out of law, are the Government and the Parliament.
politician. Known for his anti-Semitic, xenophobic and anti-democratic views, Vadim started since November 2003, to talk about European integration, economic policies, reform, privatization, market economy and social problems. He apologized for the declarations against Jews and, as far as the Hungarians are concerned, GRP considers them friends. The party website presents a situation according to which among the party members, a couple of hundred are Hungarians. Vadim did not offer any political reason for his change and denied the existence of any political agreement of the party with any other party. Still, as the leader declared on December 2003, “any government alternative in 2004 should take GRP into account. In any alternative that we would enter, with Social Democrat Party, if it gets rid of its corruption, or with the Liberal and Democrat Party, if they get rid of the corruption, we would assure a majority of 70%.”

Vadim Tudor hired even Israeli experts for his electoral campaign in 2004 and the new party slogan is “Greater Romania in a united Europe”.

The discourse change started to be accompanied in the first months of 2004 by an increase attention devoted to party discipline. Party MPs that defected from the party line and had public declarations against the party were expelled while the local units were requested by the leader to maintain their unity.

The change is perceived more as a sort electoral game but at the same time can be a smart strategy of GRP’s leader to prove the party credibility and reliability as a part in a future government coalition. If one would take seriously the discourse change, then Greater Romania Party could not be classified anymore as an extreme-right party and perhaps this is the party leader’s strategy. But since 2004 is an electoral year, it will be interesting to see if this change persists and if it helps the party to achieve its goal.

IV. Conclusions

The main goal of the present paper was to relate party success, party incumbency and party organization for the extreme right parties, concentrating on the two extreme right parties that emerged in Romania after 1990. The major question that the analysis tried to respond to was: why only one of the two extreme-right parties succeeded and the other one failed, when success and failure were understood in terms of electoral performance, entry into parliament, maintaining the party organization, and implicitly, the completion of institutionalization period.

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**PUNR** the unsuccessful party experienced an incumbency period in 1994-1996 and then the question was why the party, which experienced incumbency became insignificant, while its counterpart (with no incumbency experience) became very successful especially after 2000? What the analysis of the institutionalization phases revealed was that the incumbency period did not help the institutionalization process, rather it generated an exacerbation of the leadership and strategical factionalism inside the party, which combined with weak disciplinary measures led to party disruption and loss of significance after 2000. Given the overlap of the institutionalization phases, the party was not able to cope with the incumbency and adapt its organization in order to survive.

For the **Greater Romania Party** the road toward institutionalization was slow and it is close to completion. “Government aspiration” is what the party is promoting since 1996, but the goal is much more evident after 2000. The question analyzed in the third section was if government aspiration in the case of GRP led to the change in the party organization. As the analysis shows, there was a slight change in the complexity of the organization with the tasks much better specified after 2001, and a slight move towards even more centralization, GRP being now the most centralized Romanian party.

The change of party organization for GRP was not substantial in terms the extensiveness and intensiveness, but what has been changed dramatically since the end of 2003 is the party leader’s discourse. From a clear extremist leader, Vadim Tudor became a proEuro, proNato and proJews.

What can be conclude from the present analysis is that for an extreme right party to succeed in a newly established democracy a strong charismatic leader is needed, strong party discipline and party centralization especially if the party is to enter the government. In the presence of the strong leader an extreme right party can postpone its entry to the government for a later period when the party is sufficiently developed and when the rewards of the incumbency can be greater. Strong authoritarian attitudes inside the party and strong authoritarian leader seem to be a combination that leads to success. But an association of strong authoritarian attitudes inside the party, a moderate leader and incumbency seems to generate failure if the party is not able to change in time. Maybe it would have been better for PUNR if the party had not been entering the government and in this way, maybe the leader would have been able to keep the party united.
As for the government aspiration, this goal seems to be associated with change in the party organization and change in the political discourse of the extreme right party. When the party has a centralized way of decision making and a strong leader, party change seems to realize more easily than in an extreme right party with a moderate leader. It is not only the organizational features that permitted a change in the discourse of Vadim Tudor but also the previous party position to the potential aliens that could endanger the national unity. For GRP the range of the targets was much larger than in the case of PUNR, which had the Hungarians as the only target. Given the previous party orientation, GRP is now able to change its discourse without endangering too much its electoral fortunes, strategy that in the case if PUNR would not have been worked.

Another element that can be important in explaining why one party succeeded and the other one failed, besides the leadership and other organizational characteristics, is the origin of the two parties. GRP was more the creation of its leader who knew how to control the party from the outset, while, PUNR as the political expression of a cultural union in Transilvania, had from the beginning an organizational structure that could be hardly disciplined. Party executive in the case of PUNR was not wholly a part of the party in the public office and therefore it could not act as disciplinary force inside the party. The situation was the reverse for GRP, whose leader was an MP constantly and could control in this way the party’s MPs.

References:


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