



A University of Sussex DPhil thesis

Available online via Sussex Research Online:

<http://sro.sussex.ac.uk/>

This thesis is protected by copyright which belongs to the author.

This thesis cannot be reproduced or quoted extensively from without first obtaining permission in writing from the Author

The content must not be changed in any way or sold commercially in any format or medium without the formal permission of the Author

When referring to this work, full bibliographic details including the author, title, awarding institution and date of the thesis must be given

Please visit Sussex Research Online for more information and further details

University of Sussex

Centre Right failure in new democracies: the case of the Romanian Democratic Convention

Edward Robert Maxfield

Thesis for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, Contemporary European Studies

Submitted: January 2010

Table of contents

	Page
List of tables	4
Thesis summary	6
Preface	7
Acknowledgements	8
Chapter 1: Introduction	9
1.1 The existing debate	10
1.2 Why post-Communist Europe	14
1.3 Understanding the centre-right	17
1.4 Romanian Exceptionalism	21
1.5 The Democratic Convention as a case study	25
1.6 Defining success and failure	28
1.7 Establishing a system of party classification	34
1.8 Thesis structure	39
1.9 Data sources used	46
Chapter 2: The Convention and Beyond	51
2.1 Balancing Act: the formation of the Democratic Convention	53
2.2 Learning from defeat: the 1992 and 1996 elections	55
2.3 From opposition to power and out again	70
2.4 From Orange Revolution to Basescu Epoch	74
2.5 In search of a Convention electorate	78
2.6 Conclusion	81
Chapter 3: Turning points and legacies	82
3.1 Nation	83
3.2 Democracy, monarchy and dictatorship	87
3.3 The fall of Ceausescu	89
3.4 The events of January	93
3.5 Deepening conflict, hardening responses	97
3.6 Opening old wounds	99
3.7 Democratic Romania's founding elections	101
3.8 University Square	105
3.9 Romanian exceptionalism: the role of legacies	111
3.10 The radicalisation of politics: why it mattered	112

Chapter 4:	Elites, legacies and organisational cohesion	117
4.1	The Seniors	118
4.2	The civic activists	125
4.3	The inter-generational shift	131
4.4	Conclusion	138
Chapter 5:	The organisational development of the Democratic Convention	145
5.1	Governance structures	146
5.2	The party continues	149
5.3	The Convention at the grass roots	154
5.4	Crisis points: case studies in organisational failure	158
5.1	The other nation	159
5.2	The coalition of the disgruntled	164
5.3	End game	173
5.4	Conclusion	179
Chapter 6:	In search of an ideology	185
6.1	The evolution of Romania's right ideology	186
6.2	Anti-Communism	192
6.3	Economic reform	197
6.4	A united nation?	203
6.5	Democracy – new or old?	208
6.6	A Christian Democracy?	210
6.7	Towards a Convention ideology?	213
6.8	Return to the West	217
6.9	The moral crusade	220
6.10	Conclusion	224
Chapter 7:	Conclusion	230
7.1	Summary of key findings	230
7.2	Testing the propositions	232
7.3	Broader implications	236
7.4	Taking the research forward	238
Bibliography		244
Appendix 1:	Romania's principal political formations, 1990-2000	253
Appendix 2:	Post-Communist Romania's constitutional framework	263
Appendix 3:	Summary of interviewees	266

List of tables

Table	Page
1 The Democratic Convention vote in parliamentary elections	29
2 The main political parties in post-Communist Romania	38
3 Selected Romanian election results, 1990 – 2009	52
4 Party members of the Democratic Convention, 1992, 1996 and 2000	53
5 Local election results 1992 - seats won on County Councils	56
6 Presidential election result, 1992	58
7 Parliamentary election result, 1992	58
8 Votes cast in elections to County Councils, 2 June 1996	67
9 Opinion poll ratings, August 1996, choice for presidential elections	68
10 Opinion poll ratings, August 1996, choice, parliamentary elections	68
11 Votes cast in presidential election, 1996	70
12 Result of parliamentary elections, 1996	70
13 Chamber of Deputies election result, 2004	77
14 Parliamentary election results, 1990	102
15 Organisational structure of the Democratic Convention	149
16 Relative strength of various liberal parties, 1998	152
17 % of municipalities reporting a party organisation, 2001	157
18 Votes cast in presidential election, 2000	177
19 Result of parliamentary election, 2000	177
20 Distribution of Parliamentary seats by county	265

Map (page 85): Modern Romania showing current administrative counties and historic provinces

DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this thesis has not been, and will not be, submitted in whole or in part to another university for the award of any other degree.

.....

Edward Robert Maxfield, January 2010

University of Sussex

Thesis submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

SUMMARY

Centre-right failure in new democracies: the case of the Romanian Democratic Convention

This thesis asks why some centre-right formations have been more successful than others in the new democracies of Central and Eastern Europe. It does so by examining a single centre-right formation – the Romanian Democratic Convention. It adds to an existing body of literature that covers the development of political parties in post-Communist Central and Eastern Europe and to the small number of studies focusing on centre-right parties in the region. Specifically it adds to the literature on party success and failure and to that on Romanian party and electoral politics. The Romanian Democratic Convention is chosen to add new insights: it is unusual because it is a study of organisational failure and because there is a geographical imbalance in the published studies of the politics of the region towards the Visegrad states.

The thesis acknowledges existing academic debate about the competing influences of historical legacies, agency and structural factors in relation to post-Communist democratisation. It aims to identify what led the Convention to first establish itself but then fail to consolidate and eventually to collapse. It draws on a range of sources: semi-structured interviews; contemporaneous newspaper reports; published diaries and autobiographies and a number of secondary sources. The thesis is structured thematically, examining the role of legacies and critical events in shaping long term behaviour by politicians (chapters three and four); organisational factors and the influence of operational objectives (chapter five); the search for a broad and integrative ideology (chapter six).

The conclusions in chapter seven suggest that successfully crafting a new, broad political formation requires a degree of pragmatism, directive leadership and political entrepreneurship that was missing from the Democratic Convention because it was shaped by Romania's transition from Communism, by its organisational structure and by differences within its leadership elite so that competing operational objectives could not be reconciled when the formation entered government.

Preface

The material for this thesis has been derived from a range of published sources and from face-to-face interviews conducted by the author. The published sources are set out in the bibliography and a list of interviews is included as Appendix 3. Section 1.8 describes the sources used and the approach taken with them. None of the work was derived from joint working with another person.

Acknowledgements

I am extremely grateful to my principal supervisors, Dr Tim Bale and Professor Aleks Szczerbiak for their patience, advice and support throughout the process of creating this thesis. I am grateful, too, to Professor Paul Webb and Dr Dan Hough (who acted as supervisors for part of my studies when Dr Bale and Professor Szczerbiak were on leave) and the other members of staff and fellow post-graduate students in the Sussex European Institute who provided help and support over the course of four years of study. Gaining access to the world of Romanian politics is a challenge at the best of times but is almost impossible without a friendly introduction and I wish to place on record my particular thanks to Ionut Ciobanu, Alice Ratyis, Lavinia Stan (who also provided valuable advice on the thesis), Laurentiu Stefan and to Bill Newton Dunn MEP. I am grateful to all the interviewees who gave me their time and a good deal of fascinating and useful information. And special thanks are due to my family for their support and understanding, particularly to my wife Daniela.

Chapter 1: Introduction

The key research question addressed in this thesis is why, in new democracies, some formations on the centre-right succeed and others fail. It does so using the example of a single organisation – the Romanian Democratic Convention.¹ The thesis adds to an existing body of literature which examines the development of political parties in post-Communist Central and Eastern Europe and to the small number of studies that focus on centre-right parties in the region. Specifically it adds to the literature on party success and failure and to that on Romanian party and electoral politics. The Romanian Democratic Convention is chosen deliberately to add new insights to the existing literature as it is unusual in being a study of organisational failure and because there is a geographical imbalance in the published studies of the politics of Central and Eastern Europe towards the Visegrad states (Poland, Hungary and the Czech and Slovak Republics). This thesis identifies the ‘centre-right’ as a distinct party family and within that family it examines the factors influencing why, in the new democracies of Central and Eastern Europe, some centre-right parties fail while others succeed. However, it aims to draw conclusions which have relevance to the study of political parties in a wider context than just one region and one party family.²

The thesis acknowledges existing academic debate about the competing influences of historical legacies, agency and structural factors in relation to post-Communist democratisation. Within that framework it aims to identify what led the Convention to first establish itself as a major competitor in Romanian electoral politics but then fail to capitalise on its position and eventually to collapse.

The principal aim of this first chapter is to provide a road-map to the rest of the thesis by summarising the key issues to be explored and to survey the existing literature on the topics

¹To aid understanding, full party names translated into English are used throughout the text. The Romanian alphabet also includes a number of letters which do not appear in English and to aid understanding these have been transliterated into the nearest English equivalent.

²In this thesis, Central and Eastern Europe is taken to mean those states which were part of the Soviet bloc in Europe but not part of the Soviet Union. See section 1.2 below.

covered. It begins by summarising the existing literature on the development of parties, particularly in relation to Central and Eastern Europe and it addresses the issue of how to define success and failure in relation to political parties. The applicability of the terminology of ‘left’ and ‘right’ to the politics of the region has provoked some debate and this chapter goes on to establish what is meant by ‘centre-right’ in the context of this study. This thesis contends that there are lessons in the story of the Romanian Democratic Convention that can be applied more widely than just to Romanian politics so the chapter goes on to explain why Romania is often seen as exceptional within the region in terms of its political and social development and why the Democratic Convention forms a valid case study. It offers a framework for grouping parties into families which will help to contextualise subsequent discussions and the chapter concludes by setting out the hypotheses to be tested and the methodological approach taken.

1.1 The existing debate

The organisational structure and development of political parties and the nature of party systems and competition are all subjects which have attracted significant academic attention. Studies relating to party alliances are less numerous but this thesis does not aim to address the literature on alliances directly. Rather, the Democratic Convention is used to illustrate broader problems inherent in establishing successful political formations on the centre-right. As a result, the text in the following sections refers extensively to the literature relating to political parties because that is the way in which the literature itself is framed. The assumption underpinning this thesis is that elements of the literature on *party* success and failure can be drawn upon to inform a debate about successful strategies for centre-right formations. This is addressed more fully in the sections below on the Democratic Convention as a case study and on definitions of success and failure.

The wave of democratisations that followed the collapse of Soviet power in Europe gave further impetus to the study of party systems and competition within them, providing new test cases for existing theories and a set of unique conditions in which to establish new theses.

Lipset and Rokkan offered the classic theory of party system development in Western Europe, suggesting that parties were established around entrenched social cleavages with the formations ‘freezing’ into a pattern that endured for decades afterwards.³ However, an often highlighted problem with transplanting Lipset and Rokkan’s formulation on to Central and Eastern Europe is the absence of the kind of social cleavages and pre-existing institutions of civic society which underpinned the development of political parties in Western Europe.⁴ Additionally, the democracies of the region are still relatively youthful and so the party systems that apply in their early years may be far from fully and permanently formed. Studies have also pointed to the unique strains of the transition from Communism to liberal democracy which lead to further questions about the applicability of a cleavage based approach.⁵

Established studies of Western Europe have been built upon by specialists in post-Communist politics to provide an expanding body of works on party *systems* in Central and Eastern Europe, i.e. the nature of the environment within which parties compete, usually defined by reference to the number of parties competing.⁶ The factors influencing the organisation and development of *the formations within those systems* have in general been less well studied – this is particularly true for the centre-right of the political spectrum.⁷ This study acknowledges the importance of research into party systems as providing a context for the study of parties and their responses to the systemic environment, however, it does not seek to measure the validity of competing theories about party system

³Seymour Lipset and Stein Rokkan, *Party Systems and Voter Alignments: Cross National Perspectives*, The Free Press, Toronto, 1967.

⁴Herbert Kitschelt, *The Formation of Party Systems in East Central Europe*, *Politics & Society*, Vol. 20, no. 1, 1992.

⁵The notion of Eastern Europe’s triple transition from Communism was originally developed by Claus Offe, highlighting the impact of the transformation of political and economic structures in the region together with the need to engage in state-building processes. Claus Offe, *Capitalism by democratic design*, *Social Research*, vol. 71, no. 3, 2004, pp. 501 – 528. Kuzio has suggested that nation building and state building should be treated separately, creating a ‘quadruple transition’. Taras Kuzio, *Transition in Post-Communist States: Triple or Quadruple?*, *Politics*, vol. 21, no. 3, pp. 168 – 177.

⁶These include Kitschelt, Mansfeldova, Markowski and Toka, *Post-Communist Party Systems, Competition, Representation, and Inter-Party Cooperation*, Cambridge University Press, 1999; Peter Mair, *Party System Change*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1997 and Attila Agh, *The Politics of Central Europe*, Sage, London, 1998. Giovanni Sartori’s 1976 work, *Parties and Party Systems, A Framework for Analysis*, ECPR, London, (2005 reprint) is the lodestone for this field of study.

⁷As is referred to below, studies of parties as organisational entities have predominantly focused on parties of the left, particularly within the field of Central and Eastern European parties.

development; instead it aims to assess the factors determining the development of political formations as individual entities.

The question of why some parties in European democracies fail has been surprisingly neglected by academic analysis.⁸ One reason for this is perhaps identified by Jonathan Hopkin in his study of Spain's Democratic Centre Union (UCD) when he highlights the lack of examples of party collapse between that of the British Liberal Party in the 1920s and of his own chosen case study half a century later.⁹ However, a small number of studies have attempted to address the issue of party development in Central and Eastern Europe.

Kopecky, for example, proposes that, early in the transition to democracy, incumbent parties will possess greater incentives towards cohesion; that parties with leftist roots will build more solid grass-roots organisations; and parties existing at the time of the revolutions should display signs of greater continuity than those emerging subsequently as elite initiatives.¹⁰ Kopecky suggests that parties generally in the region will pursue catch-all electoral strategies because opportunities to create stable links with voters will be very limited (resulting from the absence of pre-formed partisan attachments, the high levels of social homogenization and the existence of other means of expressing political opinion). In addition to (and perhaps as a result of) their loose electoral constituencies, Kopecky suggests parties in the region will compensate for weak links into society by emphasising the importance of strong leadership. All of these elements are traceable in Romania's first decade of post-Communist democracy. The limitation of Kopecky's analysis for this study is that it does not offer any indication of why one centre-right formation should succeed over another one.

Beyond Central and Eastern Europe, Jonathan Hopkin, in his case study of Spain's UCD, points to the significance of institutionalisation in securing the success of a party. Hopkin

⁸A notable exception is Lawson and Merkle's 1988 survey which was nevertheless principally seeking systemic explanations for the posited decline of 'traditional' parties and the rise of 'new' political movements. Kay Lawson and Peter Merkle, *When Parties Fail*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1988.

⁹Jonathan Hopkin, *Party Formation and Democratic Transition in Spain*, Macmillan, London, 1999. Hopkin points out that examples of the collapse of established parties in western democracies have grown in more recent years, for example parties in Italy and the Canadian Progressive Conservatives.

¹⁰Petr Kopecky, *Developing Party Organisations in East-Central Europe*, Party Politics, vol. 1, no. 4, 1995, Sage, London.

builds on the work of Angelo Panebianco to examine the development of political parties in new democracies. He locates his study within the debate over the applicability of ‘rational choice’ behavioural models to party elites. He suggests that two factors – the availability of alternative incentive sources and the degree of dispersal of control over resources – determine the ability of elites to overcome barriers to co-operation. The interplay of ‘exit’ options (the availability of more attractive strategies) and ‘voice’ (the ability of an actor to influence strategy by speaking out) are seen as key elements that determine choices made by actors. Similar incentives operate for supporters of a party as exist for elites. This thesis finds strong echoes of Hopkin’s framework in the story of the Democratic Convention and in particular in the relationship between the historic parties and the civic society groups that were leading actors within the Convention and their choices of strategic priorities. This is set out in more detail in subsequent chapters.

Paul Webb and Stephen White draw together several explanatory factors to account for the trend in the most recent wave of democratic transitions towards low party membership and high levels of electoral volatility which in turn increase the risks of party failure: the changing nature of mass communications; increased access to alternative forms of political activism; the professionalisation of parties; and the existence of a very different cleavage context from those that have gone before.¹¹ Drawing on similar influences, Mair has also sought to summarise the key reasons why parties in newly democratic systems struggle to find stability.¹² Set-up costs, barriers to entry to the political market and exit from existing formations are lower: voter (and sponsor) loyalty is fluid; institutional factors such as the allocation of state resources, access to the media and electoral systems are less well formed; and potential actors are likely to be more willing to enter the party arena rather than seek alternative routes to achieve political goals. ‘Market’ information regarding voter preferences – in the form of reliable polling or past voting data – is also less clear, potentially increasing the significance of political entrepreneurship in securing success for political parties. As with Kopecky’s analysis, the outlines of these theories fit the Romanian picture but the conditions they describe apply to all parties. As a result they do

¹¹Paul Webb and Stephen White, *Political parties in new democracies*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2009.

¹²Peter Mair, *Party System Change*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1997.

not help to illustrate the factors that create a successful party or an unsuccessful one. The following sections of this chapter, and in particular section 1.5 therefore examine a range of region, country and party related explanatory frameworks in order to develop testable hypotheses.

1.2 Why post-Communist Europe?

This thesis treats the Romanian Democratic Convention as a case study of centre-right political formations within Central and Eastern Europe. As mentioned above, the CEE region is taken to be those states that were formerly part of the Communist bloc but were not part of the Soviet Union and which moved from Communist to liberal democratic forms of governance in 1989. Thus, it does not seek to include comparisons with the former Soviet states themselves or with the former Yugoslav states, or the political formations from those states. The reasons for this are partly pragmatic: this definition of the region is widely used in academic literature and it provides a manageable number of comparators. It is also partly because the states do share enough common features to make a meaningful unit of comparison: they all entered and left Communist rule at similar times; they emerged into similar environments (in that their political elites generally perceived that they Central European states whose natural 'home' was within established Euro-Atlantic structures; and the politics of their transition featured a dominant anti-Communist/successor-Communist axis.¹³

Studies of democratisation in Central and Eastern Europe have tended to emphasise the nature of the former regimes as significant in determining the development path of the new political systems. Pridham and Lewis, for example, acknowledge four factors shaping the development of party systems in new European democracies¹⁴, including the dynamics of

¹³Slovakia is a more problematic case given the greater salience of the national question. As such, Slovakian comparisons are not widely used here. For Slovak politics generally see Karen Henderson, *Slovakia: The Escape from Invisibility*, Routledge, London, 2002. For the centre-right in Slovakia see Tim Haughton and Marek Rybar, *All Right Now? Explaining the Successes and Failures of the Slovak Centre-right*, *Journal of Communist Studies and Transition Politics*, 20 (3), September 2004, pp. 115-132

¹⁴Geoffrey Pridham and Paul Lewis, (eds), *Stablising Fragile Democracies*, Routledge, London, 1996. The study examines democratic transitions in southern Europe as well as the more recent collapse of Communist rule in CEE.

the transition, the role of competing political elites and the degree to which parties develop links with society, but they emphasise the importance of historical inheritance and the problem of ‘coping with the past’. Kitschelt analysed differing post-Communist political structures in terms of legacies derived from the former regimes and developed perhaps the classic historical legacy typology for the politics of the region.¹⁵

In large part this emphasis on the Communist legacy of the new Central and East European democracies has derived from what marks out this wave of democratisations as different from previous ones.¹⁶ The new democratic systems were being formed in the absence of any meaningful civil society structures or even clearly defined socio-economic differentiation. The rupture with the previous system was dramatic and immediate rather than seeing a gradual opening of access to power for previously excluded groups. And the democratic transitions were part of a complete system change which encompassed transformation of economic structures and relationships as well as political ones. But subsequent investigation has raised some important questions about the power of these legacy-based explanations: how well do they account for differences in party development between and also within countries; and how enduring are the effects of Communist rule as the countries of the region move further away from their Communist pasts?

Attempts to look for other explanatory factors have included focusing on the role of constitutional design. Attention has been placed in particular on the choice of electoral system and the degree of ‘presidentialism’ apparent in the constitutional settlement.¹⁷ Stephen Saxonberg has, for example, directly addressed the impact of constitutional design on centre-right parties in Central and Eastern Europe. He hypothesises that parliamentary systems aid the cohesion of centre-right parties while presidential systems promote splintering around personality-led formations.¹⁸ However, there are inevitable difficulties in determining the direction of the causal link – do the systems shape the nature of political

¹⁵Herbert Kitschelt, *Formation of Party Systems*.

¹⁶Offe’s notion of the triple transition – see above.

¹⁷See for example Frances Millard, *Elections, Parties and Representation in Post-Communist Europe*, Palgrave, Basingstoke, 2004 and Ray Taras, *Post-Communist Presidents*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1996.

¹⁸Steven Saxonberg, *The Influence of Presidential Systems: Why the Right is so Weak in Conservative Poland and so Strong in the Egalitarian Czech Republic?*, *Problems of Post-Communism*, vol. 50, no. 3, 2003.

contestation or do the actors involved in the transition craft systems which best meet their needs? It is also apparent that such approaches cannot fully account for the differences that arise *between* parties under the same system – in Romania for example, parties such as the Social Democrats, the Democrats and eventually the National Liberals appear to display the characteristics of a stable party capable of surviving transfers of leadership while other parties have been faction-ridden and prone to disintegration. Saxonberg addresses this issue by suggesting that the Polish Social Democrats survived the divisive effect of the presidential system by virtue of their inherited strengths. However, if this is the case it inevitably leads to the question of whether it is factors other than the constitutional framework which determine the development of *both* sides of the political spectrum.

The Democratic Convention's failure to cross the electoral threshold for parliamentary representation in 2000 is cited by Ucen and Surotchak as the direct cause of the formation's demise – an outcome that is particularly ironic since it was changes by the Convention-led government which raised the threshold above the level of votes they received.¹⁹ Electoral arrangements meant that there was little scope for 'mid-term' feedback from the electorate for parties. Local elections were held in the same year as the general election and in 1996 and 2000 the earlier elections were held less than four months before the start of the national campaign leaving little time for reaction. As the Convention drifted towards defeat in 2000, it is possible that it was lulled into false sense of security by victory in special election for Bucharest mayor in the autumn of 1998.²⁰ Despite the missed signals, this study will show that the Convention's fate was sealed well in advance of the 2000 elections by deeper organisational flaws. For all of these reasons, this analysis does not place great emphasis on the role of constitutional factors in determining the fate of the Democratic Convention, although it provides a context for some of the most important turning points in the Convention's development.

¹⁹ Peter Ucen in Peter Ucen and Jan Surotchak (eds), *Why we lost – explaining the rise and fall of the Center Right parties in Central Europe, 1996-2002*, International Republican Institute, Bratislava, 2005.

²⁰ The Convention candidate won 41.6% of the vote in the first round, more than double the score of his nearest rival. The Social Democrat candidate took less than 20% of the vote and finished in third place. Toamna se numara voturile, *Evenimentul Zilei*, 28 October 1998. <http://www.evz.ro/articole/detalii-articol/613183/Toamna-se-numara-voturile/> accessed 27 October 2009.

Those seeking an alternative to historical-structural approaches have also examined the primary role in political developments of elite actors. Agency based analysis stresses the key role that leaders can play in shaping political outcomes as a result of decisions made in a ‘rational choice’ context. There are clear difficulties with relying too heavily on such explanations – implicit in purely rational choice models is clarity of ‘market’ information and the willingness of actors to engage in ‘outcome optimising’ behaviour, two factors which appear to be missing in the confused context of dramatic political transitions. Modifications to this approach stress the significance of ‘critical junctures’ which lock actors into a decision path which appears rational only if viewed in the context of the importance of this initial key moment.²¹ This thesis acknowledges both of these approaches in deciding on the propositions it seeks to test.

1.3 Understanding the centre-right

Studies of parties on the political left have tended to monopolise existing studies of post-Communist Central and East European politics perhaps because so many recovered phoenix-like from initial electoral oblivion. Communist parties and formations on the post-Communist left were frequently reduced to marginality with little electoral support in the founding elections across the region. However, by the mid 1990’s parties of the left had returned to power in Hungary, Poland and the Czech Republic sparking a substantial academic interest in the re-emergence of these *Communist Successor* parties. The most prominent works dealing with the recovery of Communist successor parties both assert the primary importance of the political environment prior to democratisation and the past record of state-society relations in determining the nature of the successor parties’ appeal.²²

Implicit in the extensive study of the Communist successor left is a sense of surprise at the recovery of those parties. In fact, although it was hardly apparent from most of the founding elections in the region, the newly democratised CEE offered a more hostile

²¹For an outline of critical juncture and path dependence analysis applied to parties and government formation see Bale, Boston and Church, *Natural because it had become just that*, Australian Journal of Political Science, 40/4, 2005.

²²Andras Bozoki and John Ishiyama (eds), *The Communist Successor Parties of Central and Eastern Europe*, M.E. Sharpe, 2002; Anna Grzymala-Busse, *Redeeming the Communist Past*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2002.

environment to parties on the centre-right. The left parties inherited considerable political assets in the form of experienced leaders, organisational structures and institutionalised loyalty. By contrast, opposition leaders were inexperienced and became hampered by association with radical and painful economic transformation. Additionally, the impact of five decades of Communist rule was to create societal contexts that were hugely different from those into which successful centre-right parties were born in Western Europe a century earlier: society was more homogenous; there were no interest groups to defend that were linked to a pre-existing market economy; and civic society institutions such as the church were often weak or barely existent. Finally, there was a widespread assumption among western commentators that the dissolving of the Communist glue would un-stick older conflicts and lead to an upsurge in anti-democratic, recidivist nationalism in the region.²³ Furthermore, the reality of radical economic transformation was a painful one for electorates that were largely dependent on employment in out-dated and inefficient industries or an over-blown state bureaucracy. In these circumstances it might be assumed that the successful creation of stable and dominant centre-right parties would be the exception rather than the rule. Thus far, only the Czech Republic's Civic Democrats and Fidesz of Hungary have achieved this goal among the region's centre-right parties and it is still too early to tell whether they have attained long-term stability.²⁴

The relative lack of published research into the development and fate of centre-right parties is perhaps not surprising when one considers the comparable level of research into centre-right parties in Western Europe which also lags well behind the volume of work on parties of the left. In the only published book-length work dedicated solely to centre-right parties in the region, Szczerbiak and Hanley offer an explanation:

The reasons for this paucity of research appear to be both pragmatic, reflecting the personal preferences and interests of individual researchers, and methodological, reflecting intrinsic problems of definition and comparison. Whereas communist successor parties, for example, constitute an easily identifiable bloc, defining who is

²³One such example being Misha Glenny's *Rebirth of History*, Penguin, London, 1990.

²⁴Subsequent to the period of this study the Democrat Party also appears to have achieved stability and a dominant position on the centre right in Romania.

on the centre-right from amid an array of nationalist, conservative, Christian, liberal and populist groupings is a much more difficult task.²⁵

The first potential difficulty to overcome in assessing the performance of the centre-right is thus how to define it in a post-Communist context since Conservatism and frequently nationalism were integral strands of the former Communist regimes in the CEE region. Chan points out that maintenance of the status quo was not an option for the post-Communist right since left wing parties laid stronger claim to agendas of social concern and evolutionary change.²⁶ As well as identifying 'Communist conservatives' who operate on the post-Communist left, Chan focuses on economics to distinguish between competing right wing ideologies which are either nationalistic and ambivalent to marketisation or those which adopt western style neo-liberalism.

Chan points out that opposition to Communism is generally a common feature of centre-right parties and Vachudova offers 'vigorous opposition to Communism' as the key identifier of centre-right or 'moderate right' parties in the region.²⁷ Hanley identifies three ideological strands shared by centre-right parties in the region: anti-communism; conservatism (in which he includes nationalism and populism); and liberalism. He acknowledges the ideological fault-line between liberalism and conservatism but points out that large successful West European parties tend to overcome these differences and combine both elements and that the relationship between these two groups can be seen as critical to the success of the centre-right in Central and Eastern Europe. Thus a broad consensus emerges which separates conservative Communist-successor parties on the one hand and extreme nationalists on the other from a broad centre-right which is the focus of this research. The centre-right encompasses moderate nationalist and traditionalist appeals, Christian democracy, social liberals and economic liberals. Anti-Communism is a strong

²⁵ Aleks Szczerbiak and Sean Hanley (eds), *Centre-Right Parties in Post-Communist East-Central Europe*, Routledge, Abingdon, 2005 page 1.

²⁶ Kenneth Chan in Paul Lewis (eds), *Party Development and Democratic Change in Post-Communist Europe*, Frank Cass, 2001.

²⁷ Like Chan, Vachudova identifies a strain of conservatism that has been co-opted by the post-Communist left and she also points to parties operating in the newly formed states of the region which prioritise nationalism. Milada Vachudova, *Centre-Right Parties and Political Outcomes in East Central Europe*, *Party Politics*, vol. 14, no. 4, 2008, pp. 387 – 405.

common theme as is a belief in liberal democracy and other 'Western' values evidenced through support for EU membership and often NATO.

Some studies have explored the links between party family and organisational form. Kopecky suggests that successor parties on the left in post-Communist states are more likely than parties on the right to develop mass membership bases.²⁸ Hanley's study of the Czech centre-right does not contradict this view but indicates that the success of the Civic Democrats is in part due to its strong and committed activist base and professional organisation.²⁹ Enyedi, examining the Hungarian case, sees centre-right parties there operating with slimmer organisational structures, individualised leadership and elevation of the 'party in public office'.³⁰

The main focus of comparative work dealing with parties on the centre-right has been on Europe's Christian Democratic parties. Van Hecke and Gerard, for example, take as their theme the trend of electoral defeats for a number of large, established and traditionally centrist Christian Democratic parties in Western Europe in the 1990s. They assert that the end of Communism was followed by the growth in significance of European issues and migration, pressuring Christian Democrats to respond to neo-liberal economic ideas on the one hand and far-right nationalists on the other.³¹ Frank Wilson also explores the challenges facing the centre-right at the end of the 20th Century and focuses in particular on the impact of the breakdown in class voting.³² These factors may well shed some light on the general challenges facing the centre-right in Central and Eastern Europe but they barely help to explain why centre-right parties have remained the non-socialist alternative of choice for so many voters in the region. And nor do they immediately answer why some parties have been more successful than others.

Milada Vachudova locates the development trajectories of the region's right wing parties in legacy explanations. She sees the key variable as the presence or absence of an opposition

²⁸Petr Kopecky, *Developing Party Organisations*.

²⁹Sean Hanley, *New Right*.

³⁰Zsolt Enyedi, *Searching for the Right Organization: Ideology and Party Structure in East-Central Europe*, *Party Politics* 2008 14: 455-477.

³¹Steven van Hecke and Emmanuel Gerard (eds), *Christian Democratic Parties in Europe since the end of the Cold War*, Leuven University Press, 2004.

³²Frank Wilson, *The European Centre-Right at the end of the Twentieth Century*, MacMillan, 1998.

to the former regimes in the years prior to their collapse since dominant moderate right wing parties in the region all emerged from pre-1989 opposition movements. Vachudova's argument is important for two reasons - firstly because it challenges established theories that only Communist successor parties inherited useable political histories; secondly because, as a by-product of her main argument, she constructs a thesis which accounts in part for the success of the Romanian Social Democrats by virtue of their ability to capture a conservative political narrative.³³

An alternative approach is offered by Szczerbiak and Hanley. Szczerbiak and Hanley's collection utilises four country-based case studies in an attempt to explore these issues from new angles. In particular, their work emphasises the role of elite decision making within parties and responses to critical political junctures in preference to historical-structural approaches. Paul Lewis summarises the approach as, "direct[ing] attention to the emergence of the post-communist countries as a prime arena of political activity – and thus as a sphere of behaviour subject to major uncertainties and the influence of human volition."³⁴ Ucen utilises Szczerbiak and Hanley's theoretical framework to suggest three clusters of reasons for a succession of centre-right defeats across Eastern Europe at the beginning of the 21st Century: the political costs of governing and introducing unpopular reforms; party organisational weaknesses; and poor communications and electoral strategies.³⁵

1.4 Romanian Exceptionalism

The devastating impact of Ceausescu's eccentric regime attracted the attention of a number of Western analysts prior to 1989 and its uniquely violent ending sparked a surge of further interest. Communist Romania was widely viewed as among the least free and most economically backward states in the region, the ruling party compensating for its lack of policy successes by procuring the imagery of national chauvinism to maintain its political legitimacy. Classic studies of Romania's society which emphasised these themes were

³³Milada Vachudova, *Integration, Security and Immigration: The European Agendas of Eastern Europe's Right Wing Parties*, Council of European Studies Paper, Chicago, March 2002.

³⁴Paul Lewis in Szczerbiak and Hanley, page 147

³⁵Peter Ucen in Ucen and Surotchak (eds), page 16

produced by Katherine Verdery and Michael Shafir and these approaches have retained a significant influence over perceptions of the country's subsequent political development.³⁶

The collapse of the Communist regime in Romania provided some of the most dramatic images of a dramatic year as seemingly entrenched ruling parties fell from power across Central & Eastern Europe in 1989. The –literal – flight of President Nicolae Ceausescu from the roof of the Communist Party Central Committee building in Bucharest marked the end of a repressive and highly personalised regime. The overthrow of Ceausescu and the events that followed have generated a tremendous volume of literature in both English and Romanian.³⁷ These works have varied considerably in perspective and quality and include eye-witness accounts by participants, near-contemporary analysis from journalists and more considered academic studies.³⁸ The leading actors in the revolution have published their own accounts. A parliamentary enquiry was heavily influenced by partisan concerns and resulted in official and dissenting reports.³⁹ Journalists published contemporary accounts and academics more learned analyses, although both of these latter genres share an unfortunate tendency to place too great an emphasis on rumour and unsubstantiated interpretations from the narrow perspective of individual participants. Among the most thorough and dispassionate studies of the fall of Ceausescu is Peter Siani-Davies' work which provides this study with valuable analysis of the genesis of post-Communist Romanian politics.⁴⁰

Post-Communist Romania saw the development of a party system unlike a number of its neighbours in the north and west of the region in that the left endured as the dominant force

³⁶Katherine Verdery, *National Ideology Under Socialism: Identity and Cultural Politics in Ceausescu's Romania*. Berkeley, University of California Press, 1991 and Michael Shafir *Romania: Politics, Economics & Society*, Frances Pinter, London, 1985.

³⁷Examples of works exploring the nature of revolution include: Nestor Ratesh, *Romania: The Entangled Revolution*, Praeger, New York, 1991; Ruxandra Cesereanu, *Decembrie '89*, Polirom, Bucharest, 2004; Andrei Codrescu, *The Hole in the Flag*, William Morrow, New York, 1991. Ratesh was head of Radio Free Europe's Romanian service; Cesereanu is an academic based in Cluj whose work focuses on the cultural impact of Communism in Romania; Codrescu is a journalist and author who returned to Romania from the United States in December 1989 to report on and participate in the revolution.

³⁸Romanian politics has attracted the attention of scholars from other European states – notably France and Germany – but on the whole this study does not cover sources in languages other than English and Romanian.

³⁹The author of the (National Salvation Front) government report, Sergiu Nicolaescu, published his findings as *Lupta Pentru Putere, Decembrie 1989*, Editura All, Bucharest.

⁴⁰Peter Siani-Davies, *The Romanian Revolution of December 1989*, Cornell University Press, 2005.

throughout the first decade and a half of democracy. The principal opposition to the left was provided by an effective centre right in three of the first five General Elections but numerous alternative competition structures could have developed. The split between President Ion Iliescu and Prime Minister Petre Roman in 1991 at a time when the centre-right was divided and weak could have resulted in a left-left competition pattern, especially given the collectivist impulses consistently demonstrated by Romanian citizens. Much has been made of the salience of nationalist appeals in Romanian politics and with the nationalist right securing second place in the 2000 elections, a left-far right structure could also have endured.⁴¹ As happened elsewhere in the region, the founding election of the democratic Romanian state saw the election of numerous small parties to parliament and a fractured opposition structure could have developed. Similarly, the fourth option often referred to as the Mexican model, could have seen the left entrench itself into a monolithic position devoid of effective opposition.⁴² The range of these possible options and the lack of stability in Romania's party system illustrate some of the challenges faced in establishing a typology for party systems in new democracies.

Assessment of democratic development and the emergence of parties and party competition in Romania has tended to draw heavily on the significance of the country's Communist legacy.⁴³ Linz and Stepan classify the Ceausescu regime as Sultanistic and they trace forward a heavy influence into a post-Communist political structure which is personality-focused with weak parties. Ceausescu's regime suffocated civic society and internal opposition, easing the path of Iliescu to power since there were no alternative opposition structures and the Front leadership came to embody the 'anti-Sultan' image which endured for a substantial period beyond the immediate post-revolution period.⁴⁴ Wagner acknowledges this classification and points out that post-Communist political development

⁴¹See the various works of Tom Gallagher in particular for an exploration of the strengths of the far right in Romania (cited below).

⁴²See Mary Fischer in Daniel Nelson, *Romania After Tyranny*, Westview Press, Boulder, 1992, page 52.

⁴³As have studies of broader socio-political developments. See for example Badescu & Sum's study of Communist and pre-Communist legacies and their influence on the development of civil society in Romania. Gabriel Badescu and Paul Sum, *Historical Legacies, Social Capital and Civil Society: Comparing Romania on a Regional Level*, *Europe-Asia Studies*, 57/1, Jan 2005.

⁴⁴Juan Linz and Alfred Stepan, *Problems of democratic transition and consolidation*, Johns Hopkins University Press, Baltimore, 1996.

has tended to 'revolve around the marshalling of the legacies of the past.'⁴⁵ Richard Hall identifies a common political culture across ideologies which originates in the Communist era with low levels of civic participation, a lack of long-term partisan commitment and strong anti-incumbency feelings derived from a tendency to blame those in power.⁴⁶

Mungiu-Pippidi locates the continuation of Communist successor formations in power after the downfall of Ceausescu in three sets of causes: *historical* factors resulted in a lack of an urban left tradition (leading the Communists to adopt more parochial appeals) and the absence of an organised resistance to Ceausescu; the nature of the *transition* led to the ascension of ex-Communists to leadership of the revolutionary National Salvation Front; and *structural* causes resulted in a highly centralised post-Communist system and strong public support for collectivism and strong leadership.⁴⁷

Tismaneanu, too, traces the legacy of Ceausescuism in Romania's political exceptionalism, creating: "...a lingering climate of distrust, deception and fear...prolonging authoritarian patterns of leadership and domination exerted by the ruling elite."⁴⁸

The theme of Romania's exceptionalism is sustained in much of the comparative analysis of post-Communist development in the region. Neighbours to the north and west saw broad-based opposition movements win founding elections in the new democracies with former Communists banished to the electoral margins, democratic institutions were entrenched and the construction of civil society and a market economy began. In Romania, by contrast, democratic transition came late with a popular uprising spreading from Timisoara to Bucharest and beyond at the very end of the year of revolutions. Remarkably, the Communists appeared to retain control of the state by acquiring leadership of the revolution and winning the first two democratic polls. Democratisation faltered as opposition forces were subject to violent attacks in the early post-Ceausescu years, and economic change, too, was chronically slow. Tismaneanu, again, locates the reasons for the opposition's weakness in the absence of any preceding dissent:

⁴⁵F. Peter Wagner in Henry Carey (ed), *Romania Since 1989*, Lexington, Lanham, 2004, page 49

⁴⁶Richard Hall in Henry Carey, pp. 215 - 228

⁴⁷Alina Mungiu-Pippidi in Bozoki and Ishiyama (eds), pp. 188 - 205

⁴⁸Vladimir Tismaneanu in Karen Dawisha and Bruce Parrot (eds), *Politics, Power and the Struggle for Democracy in South East Europe*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1997.

Immediately after the 1989 revolution, unlike post-Leninist Hungary and Poland, Romania had no enlightened, reform-oriented faction within the party elite to negotiate a transition. [The Party] had no collective leadership, no inner party life and no genuine feedback from lower to higher echelons.⁴⁹

Grzymala-Busse characterises Romanian politics as only partly reformed. She suggests that the less complete the break with the old regime, the less the successor party has to reform and weak opposition parties are likely to follow.⁵⁰ In a similar vein, Kitschelt has suggested that the more repressive the out-going Communist regime, the greater the durability of the successor parties (which implies a knock-on effect on the strength of opposition parties).⁵¹ As already mentioned, Vachudova has also formulated a typology for right wing parties drawing on regime legacy factors.

1.5 The Democratic Convention as a case-study

Given the breadth of assumptions that Romania is an exceptional case within the region, why does the Democratic Convention represent a credible case-study?

Its nearest direct comparator would appear to be Solidarity Electoral Action which also failed in its efforts to build enduring organisational structure to dominate the centre-right political space in Poland. The fate of the Convention contrasts with that of FIDESZ in Hungary and the Civic Democrats in the Czech Republic which, thus far at least, appear to have established stable organisational structures and to have established a dominant position on the centre-right. It has less in common with the broad 'movement parties' such as Civic Forum (the Czech Republic) and the Union of Democratic Forces (Bulgaria) since it was not born directly out of popular protests against the Communist regime in 1989. Rather it was deliberately created at a later date as an alliance by existing party elites as a means of countering perceived electoral weakness compared to the left. Like Solidarity Electoral Action it was brought together by non-party actors (the Solidarity Trades Union in the Polish case, the democracy and human rights campaign group the Civic Alliance in

⁴⁹Vladimir Tismaneanu, *Stalinism for all Seasons*, University of California Press, Berkeley, 2003, page 233.

⁵⁰Anna Grzymala-Busse, pp. 19 - 68

⁵¹Herbert Kitschelt, *Formation of Party Systems*

the case of the Democratic Convention). But, inductively, it would appear that the Convention should not have suffered the same internal political tensions as Solidarity Electoral Action because of the need in the latter organisation to meld the demands of a trades union with liberal market-oriented reformers: it is to be expected that its greater ideological cohesion would have made it a more united and enduring structure.

As a case study the Convention also contrasts with the (apparently successful) strategic approaches adopted by FIDESZ and the Civic Democrats: the Convention opted for collaboration rather than competition among centre-right formations. Does the fate of the Convention suggest that competition between centre-right parties is more likely to lead to the dominance of one stable formation while collaboration weakens the centre-right's ability to cohere in the medium term? It is for these reasons that the Democratic Convention makes a distinctive and instructive case study among the centre-right formations of the CEE region.

The Convention was formed following the overwhelming victory of the Communist-successor National Salvation Front in the parliamentary elections of May 1990 and the election of the Front's candidate – Ion Iliescu – as state president. It initially provided a vehicle for liberal, Christian Democratic, social democratic and ethnic Hungarian opponents of the post Communist left and contested the elections of 1992, 1996 and 2000 before dissolving in the wake of catastrophic defeat.⁵² It was the main challenger to the left in Romania from its inception until the National Liberals broke away to contest the 2000 elections alone. Formed as an electoral alliance it experienced the challenges associated with bringing together existing parties and formations into a single vehicle and although merger into a single party was occasionally contemplated it remained a coalition throughout its existence. It experienced victory and defeat in national elections and although there was internal tension (which ultimately proved highly significant) between advocates of different political strategies, there is no doubt that the main protagonists shared a common view of the Convention's prime objective – to be a formation that was sufficiently broad to achieve

⁵²The combination of parties making up the Convention varied over time. The composition and organisational structure of the Convention is explored in detail in chapters 2 and 5.

electoral success at national level. As such it provides a convenient, time limited, case study of the development dynamics of a centre-right formation.

The limited number of works which examine the failure of the Convention have tended to focus on the proximate causes of the collapse of the formation, particularly its performance in government from 1996 to 2000. Michael Shafir, for example, suggests four explanations for the collapse of support for the Convention: that it promised too much to too many; that its economic performance was disastrous; that it was the victim of a fluctuating protest vote; and that the far-right Greater Romania Party became ideologically more attractive because of a growing idolisation of pre-war nationalist leaders.⁵³ Within this relatively small body of work there has been almost no attempt to examine the reasons for and the effects of the Convention's choice of organisational structure. Pavel and Huiu describe the Convention's internal structures in some detail but theirs is a largely narrative account aimed in the main at determining whether the Convention existed in a 'real' or a 'virtual' form outside of elections and whether it ceased to exist at all in any meaningful sense after the 1996 election victory.⁵⁴ Roper offers a study of the views of local party leaders regarding the performance and future development of the Convention but it does not seek to place its findings in a broader context.⁵⁵ Lazaroiu's contribution identifies a number of possible explanations for the Convention's defeat in the 2000 elections, but it does not explore why the Convention's organisational structure was unable to cope with the strains of governing.⁵⁶ The journal *Sfera Politicii* has published a number of insightful articles, particularly focusing on aspects of the formation's collapse but these are generally (well informed) opinion pieces rather than derived from systematic research.⁵⁷

⁵³Michael Shafir, *The Greater Romania Party and the 2000 elections in Romania*, Romanian Journal of Society and Politics, 1/2, November 2001.

⁵⁴Dan Pavel and Iulia Huiu, *Nu Putem Reusi Decat Impreuna*, Polirom, Bucharest, 2003, particularly Chapter six.

⁵⁵Steven Roper, *From opposition to government coalition: unity and fragmentation in the Democratic Convention of Romania*, East European Quarterly 31/4, January 1998. The study's findings are somewhat undermined by the refusal of the National Peasant Party to co-operate, resulting in the Convention's leading party being excluded from the survey.

⁵⁶Sebastian Lazaroiu authored the Romanian case study in Ucen and Surochak, *Why We Lost*.

⁵⁷See in particular *Sfera Politicii* 87/88, their special edition dealing with the 2000 elections, published by FSC, Bucharest, 2001.

The proximate cause of collapse – the Convention’s dramatic loss of popular support in the late 1990’s – is clearly an important part of the formation’s story. Political capital is difficult to acquire and is easily degraded and participation in coalition government is potentially very expensive.⁵⁸ A party will be obliged to make concessions on policy and the allocation of resources (such as ministerial posts) to partners (potentially undermining the support of a party’s electoral constituency, sponsor organisations and activists who are motivated by policy concerns and elites motivated by acquisition of office). It may also suffer from its participation in unpopular policy decisions and difficult coalition management issues that are only partially under its control. However, participation in government is not itself a direct cause of party failure – even in a regional context, numerous parties have survived the experience of governing. Rather it is a derivative factor with permanent damage arising from more fundamental issues. This research aims to identify the underlying weaknesses faced by the Democratic Convention which resulted in it suffering such a spectacular haemorrhage of political capital in the period. From this it will draw broader conclusions about the causes of party development and failure in the arena of post-Communist politics.

1.6 Defining success and failure

To determine the success – or failure - of a party or formation it is also necessary to define the criteria by which this assessment can be made, although this is not always done clearly.⁵⁹ In this case (a study of organisational failure), the measure used is essentially an absence of success. Success for a political formation being defined in the terms used by Szczerbiak and Hanley: where a formation achieves dominance of its electoral constituency and maintains that dominance over a substantial period of time. The Democratic Convention failed in these terms as can be seen in Table 1 below. It survived to contest just three national elections, failing to win parliamentary representation at the third. It was dominant among the centre-right parties in both 1992 and 1996 but never won more than

⁵⁸See Kaare Strom, Wolfgang Muller and Torbjorn Bergman, *Rulers, Rules and Coalitions*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2008.

⁵⁹In her study of Communist-successor parties, Grzymala-Busse (cited above), for example, does not define the criteria of success that she uses, instead taking it as given that the Polish and Hungarian parties were successful and the Czech and Slovak parties were not.

half of the broader ‘democratic opposition’ vote (votes won by all the centrist, pro-democratic parties that opposed Iliescu’s Social Democrats) which was its natural political space.

Table 1:⁶⁰ Democratic Convention and centre-right vote (%) in Parliamentary (Chamber of Deputies) elections

	<u>1992</u>	<u>1996</u>	<u>2000</u>
Democratic Convention*	20.0	30.2	5.0
Total ‘centre-right’ [#]	27.0	35.0	12.3
Total ‘democratic opposition’ ⁺	44.6	52.2	31.9
Total opposition**	62.3	78.5	63.4

* As Democratic Convention 2000 in the 2000 elections

All national, centre-right formations (eg, does not include micro parties and ethnic minority formations)

+ Centrist and centre-right formations (excluding micro parties)

** Votes cast for all parties other than the Social Democrats (ie including the far left and the far right, independents and regional and ethnic parties.)

Classic examinations of party organisational forms tend to be rooted in the era of mass parties that followed the onset of mass democracy in Western Europe and North America.⁶¹ Changes over time in established democracies and the appearance of new democracies have led to challenge and re-assessment of some of the basic assumptions of these classic works. Katz and Mair, for example, suggest the passing away of the mass party as links between parties and civil society, as well as membership and participation decline.⁶² Yet, parties remain an integral element of liberal democracies. Even in post-Communist Europe where some leaders of the mass popular movements that brought down Communist regimes flirted with a ‘post-party’ politics, party systems rapidly established themselves as the standard.⁶³ Furthermore, they did so with relatively low levels of party membership from the outset and without the benefit of institutionalised resilience that has seen parties in Western

⁶⁰Details of election results are taken from Essex University’s election result archive:

<http://www2.essex.ac.uk/elect/database/indexCountry.asp?country=ROMANIA&opt=elc> .

⁶¹See for example, Robert Michels, *ibid* and Mosei Ostrogorski, *Democracy and the organization of political parties*, New Brunswick, 1982 (first published 1902).

⁶²Richard Katz and Peter Mair, *Changing Models of Party Organization and Party Democracy*, Party Politics, 1995, vol 1, number 1, pp. 5-28, Sage, London.

⁶³See Sean Hanley, *The New Right in the New Europe*, Routledge, Abingdon, 2008, particularly Chapter 4 for a description of how initial ‘anti-party’ sentiments in the Czech Civic Forum were rapidly overtaken by events.

Europe survive the erosion of their traditional bases of support.⁶⁴ This lack of grounding in society may well have contributed to the volatility of party systems in the first post-Communist decades but, despite this, some formations on both the left and the right throughout the region have stabilised to create sustained patterns of party competition. Indeed, some formations appear to have opted for an organisational strategy that deliberately eschewed the creation of a mass membership – an approach not limited to parties in Central and Eastern Europe, as studies of Italy’s *Forza Italia* show.⁶⁵

The search for the role of organisational factors in explaining individual party success and failure has been further clouded because authors have focused largely on the impact of organisation on party *systems* rather than how individual formations organise themselves *within* party systems (and the impact this might have on their performance). Thus the familiar ‘catch-all’ and ‘cartel’ party models apply to groups of parties and carry the assumption that these offer new ‘ideal types’ that parties trend towards because of competitive pressures or social trends in the environment within which they operate.

Panebianco’s model, mentioned above, suggest parties can marshal the resources at their disposal to maximise their opportunities and he suggests that dominant elites push parties towards organisational stability in order to consolidate their position.⁶⁶ But why do some formations opt for apparently sub-optimal organisational forms?⁶⁷ After all, electoral logic

⁶⁴It should be noted that one study of Romanian parties since 2000 shows an against-the-trend level of party membership growth which is most probably explained by the role of rent-seeking in membership recruitment. See unpublished conference paper by Alexandra Ionascu and Sorina Soare, *Cultivating Large Membership Rolls, the Romanian Case*, September 2008, Free University of Brussels. Spirova also identifies what she calls a ‘higher level of organisational development’ among Bulgarian parties – a trait she attributes to the influence of the Bulgarian Socialist Party in shaping the behaviour of its competitors and to the significance of local elections in the system which prompts local elites to recruit and organise to create local power bases. Maria Spirova, *Political Parties in Bulgaria*, Party Politics, Vol. 11, No. 5, 2005, pp 601 – 622.

⁶⁵See Caterina Paolucci, *From Democrazia Cristiana to Forza Italia and the Popolo della Libertà: Partisan change in Italy*, Modern Italy, Vol. 13, No. 4, November 2008, pp. 465-480. Paolucci describes a process whereby the party leadership at the centre sought to reduce the influence of local supporters ‘clubs’ in order to reduce the risk of factionalism, a move which contributed to a 40% drop in party membership between 2001 and 2006.

⁶⁶Angelo Panebianco, *Political Parties, Organisation and Power*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1988, esp. Chapter 3.

⁶⁷Kay Lawson has suggested that political scientists’ preference for examining party systems rather than individual parties derives from their greater visibility, their fit with methodological habits and motivations of academics in the field. Kay Lawson, *Political Parties Inside and Out*, Comparative Politics, 1990.

might suggest all formations would move towards consolidated structures that provide the most efficient means of achieving their goals:

Economic accounts of party formation and development hold that the logic of the electoral market means that unconsolidated and proto-parties will converge on the equilibrium of institutionalised parties. Parties are held to seek votes as a means to gaining office, and will adopt the organisational form that best suits this goal. According to an evolutionary conception, no less influential for usually being implicit, parties should learn from their mistakes, combine and institutionalise or be eliminated from the system... Yet parties often seem to be unwilling or unable to anticipate and learn...⁶⁸

Political formations are dynamic, multi-faceted entities which can adapt over time in response to changing internal pressures and the external political environment. As such, they can be seen, to an extent, as masters of their own fate. Enduring success for a *party* has been characterised as institutionalisation – where actors engage in a process of ‘goal substitution’: the subordination of individuals’ or groups’ direct objectives in favour of achieving the intermediate goal of success for the party in the expectation that the achievement of their principal aims will only be deferred.⁶⁹ Hopkin views an organisation as providing a means to an end while an institution operates as an end in itself: “...institutionalisation involves an organisation generating emotional attachments and loyalties which sustain it in the face of threats to its existence.”⁷⁰ The success or failure of the Democratic Convention can be measured in the same terms.

Downs offered the classic formulation of parties pursuing control of resources within a rational choice framework.⁷¹ Muller and Strom further defined the objectives of parties as pursuing strategies aimed at office seeking, policy seeking and vote seeking.⁷² Panebianco has criticised the assumptions underlying these approaches by questioning whether parties

⁶⁸Jason Sharman and Robert Phillips, *An internalist perspective on party consolidation and the Bulgarian Union of Democratic Forces*, *European Journal of Political Research*, Vol. 43, 2004, pp. 397 – 420.

⁶⁹Robert Michels, *Political Parties*, Crowell-Collier, 1962.

⁷⁰Hopkin, page 12

⁷¹Anthony Downs, *An Economic Model of Democracy*, Harper, New York, 1965.

⁷²Wolfgang Muller and Kaare Strom, *Policy, Office, Votes?*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1999

behave as rational organisations in pursuit of specific goals.⁷³ He points to parties in the West European context such as the French Communist Party which appeared to make conscious strategic choices which lead to the party being permanently in opposition. The real aims of a party are various and difficult to determine and may be disguised in the sense that stated aims may differ from the operational objectives pursued by party leaders. Muller and Strom also acknowledge many of the difficulties associated with essentially static models of party behaviour - the potential for a hierarchy of goals, the need for compromise between competing objectives and the underlying assumption that parties are unitary actors when they are clearly complex organisations experiencing internal competition over goals.

The main actors on the centre-right in Romania shared a broad goal of becoming the leading player in national government and this makes it possible to apply the success criteria adopted by Szczerbiak, Hanley and others to define a mechanism for assessing the Convention's performance. Their approach does not directly draw upon the literature relating to institutionalisation but its assumptions are, to an extent, implicit in their operationalisation of success (and by extension failure). They reject policy implementation as a measure of success for being too prone to external influences. Instead they opt for two essentially intermediate or instrumental goals: the durability of a political formation and its ability to maximise its vote within its constituency.⁷⁴ Such a methodology has the benefit of measuring tangible outcomes – the proportion of the centre-right vote captured by a particular formation and the number of elections it fights as a viable formation and the trajectory of its popular support over time. It also acknowledges the potential loss in political assets that would result from, for example, a siloed formation as currently exists on the right in Poland, or through the rapid decline of a dominant formation and its replacement by new forces operating in a similar space.⁷⁵ In other words, durability and 'constituency dominance' allow us to measure both short-term electoral success and longer term institutionalisation and it is this measure of party success which is used throughout

⁷³Angelo Panebianco, *Political Parties, Organisation and Power*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1988.

⁷⁴Sean Hanley, Aleks Szczerbiak, Tim Haughton and Brigid Fowler, *Sticking Together: Explaining Comparative Centre-Right Party Success in Post-Communist Central and Eastern Europe*, *Party Politics*, Vol. 14, No. 4, July 2008, pp407 - 434

⁷⁵As happened in Romania, for example, following the collapse of the Convention and the subsequent creation of the Truth and Justice Alliance between the Democratic Party and the National Liberals

this thesis. The performance of the Convention, judged in these terms, is set out in Table 1 which clearly demonstrates a pattern of growth both of its electoral support and within its own constituency, followed by dramatic collapse.

The Democratic Convention failed to do what FIDESZ did in Hungary and what the Civic Democrats did in the Czech Republic. It was successful in creating a broad centre-right formation for a short time but it was not durable. So the failure of the Democratic Convention arises from its inability to evolve into an organisation that provides an enduring and stable base for centre-right elites from which to compete for power.

As will be shown in chapter 2, the collapse of the Convention led to large parts of the centre-right political elite to be cast out of parliament in the short term. Few of the same actors returned as serious political ‘players’ at a later date. The National Liberal Party retained its presence in parliament (contesting the 2000 elections outside of the Convention) but the other main consequence of the 2000 election was that it created the opportunity for the Democrat Party to colonise the centre-right space vacated by the National Peasants. They entered an electoral alliance with the National Liberals for the 2004 elections but they had engineered a dominant position within that alliance (thanks largely to the victory of their party leader in the presidential elections of 2004). They were able to terminate the alliance shortly after the elections and to establish a new formation (with some recruits from the National Liberal Party) that became the principal centre-right vehicle thereafter. Thus, as a consequence of the consolidation of the Convention *not* being achieved (the intermediate measure of success), the existing centre-right elite was largely replaced by elite actors whose initial political positioning was as reformist members of the former Communist bureaucracy and whose attachment to centre-right ideological positions was loose.

The Democratic Convention was, of course, conceived as an electoral alliance and was not intended to supercede the existing political parties when it was formed. This does not negate its legitimacy as a subject for study. The constituent parties within the Convention *might* be viewed as acting like factions within a formal party structure, competing internally for policy gains and positions. But while this may appear superficially to be the case in

truth the behaviour of the member parties does not match the behaviour of party factions as they have been defined by academics thus far.⁷⁶ Within the Convention there was policy competition over issues relating to the Communist past, with the Civic Alliance pressing for more action in this area, and over the policy demands of the ethnic Hungarian community.⁷⁷ Richard Rose, for example, emphasises that parties have an existence outside of election time and that factions play a role in furthering policy agendas between elections. But Rose under-plays other incentive structures (office seeking and access to patronage resources) which appear to be more significant factors in dividing the National Liberals from the National Peasants. Morgenstern asserts that institutional design is crucial in maintaining strong factions and that the political elites he studies in Uruguay themselves deliberately crafted an electoral system that institutionalised the role of factions in the electoral process.⁷⁸ But Convention party leaders did not follow this route – indeed one of the few significant changes they made to the constitutional framework when in office ran counter to the preservation of parties-as-factions by raising the electoral threshold for electoral alliances to 8% of the vote compared to 5% for unitary parties. The Convention's leaders could, though, have opted for a different strategy that would have potentially created a clearer organisational identity for the Convention and made it the dominant force on the centre-right for a longer period. This study will examine the reasons why these choices were not made.

1.7 Establishing a system of party classification

Studies of party systems in the newly formed democracies have often stressed the differences with the older West European systems since parties established in Central and Eastern Europe after the fall of Communism appeared in a different historical and societal context.⁷⁹ Nevertheless, transnational comparison of party families in a post-Communist context remains popular and valid. As well as offering the benefits of a convenient framework for analysis, parties themselves have often made conscious efforts to mirror the

⁷⁶Richard Rose, *Parties, factions and tendencies in Britain*, Political Studies, volume 12, number 1, 1964, pp. 33 - 46

⁷⁷See chapter five below.

⁷⁸Scott Morgenstern, *Organised factions and disorganised parties*, Party Politics, volume 7, number 2, 2001, pp. 235 – 256.

⁷⁹See, for example, Kitschelt, *Party Systems*.

patterns of established international formations and this has resulted in an increasingly ‘westernised’ structure to party competition in the Central and Eastern European region.⁸⁰ The significance of establishing a definition for the centre-right is discussed below and the following section briefly sets out a methodology for grouping the main Romanian parties active during the period of study in to party families. The aim of doing so is to give context to the intra-party competition that existed in Romania in the period studied by showing where the Democratic Convention’s electoral competitors from across the political spectrum were located. It also demonstrates that in the first decade after the fall of Communism establishing a clear definition of the centre-right is not completely straightforward, not least because it was not until the end of the 1990s that parties themselves began to use the term regularly to describe their political position.

Mair and Mudde describe four principle methods of assessing party family: sociology/origin; transnational linkages; policy/ideology; and name, although they suggest the best results might be obtained by cross-referencing origin and ideology.⁸¹ Use of origin has the advantage of fixing a definition in a temporal sense but that also has a clear disadvantage in a time of great political flux since parties can relocate on spectrum over time. Ideology has a dual advantage in being both more durable than individual policy decisions and more easily assessed in a comparative sense since parties often tend to explicitly locate themselves in a wider (ie internationally recognised) ideological framework. The obvious weakness of relying on ideology is the fluidity of ideological positioning among parties in the region. Romania’s Democrat Party, for example, joined the centre-right European Peoples Party formation after years as an avowedly social democratic party; the Romanian National Unity Party moved towards the centre having begun life on the extreme right of Romanian politics. The examples are not limited to Romania – see, for example, the road travelled by Hungary’s Fidesz from left-liberal youth party to nationalist conservative party.

⁸⁰See Attila Agh, *The end of the beginning: the partial consolidation of East Central European parties and party systems*, Papers on Democratic Transition, Budapest 1996, cited in Peter Mair and Cas Mudde (eds), *The Party Family and its Study*, Annual Review of Political Science, vol. 1, 1998, pp. 211 – 229.

⁸¹Mair and Mudde.

Use of name is problematic in a post-Communist context. Parties associated with the former regimes were often very keen to throw off any clear connections with the Communist Party, while others attempted to establish linkages with pre-Communist formations which related only tentatively to their current location. To an extent the term ‘party’ itself became contaminated by its association with the former regime. A link to international party families also offers a very partial answer since many parties operate outside the established groupings and others move between them at different times.

A fifth method of classification does suggest itself, that of coalition preferences. It could be argued that, within the context of post-Communist Europe, this is a sub-set of the sociology/origin classification since attitudes to potential coalition partners are often determined by the parties’ historic position vis a vis the former Communist regime. However, this would potentially exclude the significance of coalition choices made by newer parties which appear in the spectrum. In the Romanian context this approach is relatively fruitful since attitudes to forming coalitions with the Social Democratic Party (and its Communist-successor forebears) offers a relatively consistent dividing line between those parties which have only partnered the Social Democrats; those which consistently opposed coalition making with the party and instead co-operated with or formed part of the Democratic Convention; and those parties which have taken a more pragmatic approach and co-operated with both ‘sides’.

There is also potentially a sixth means of classifying parties – by assessing how voters perceive them. Inevitably such a method of assessment will be influenced by how voters see *themselves* and as such may not maintain consistency over time.⁸² However, this information has not been factored into the classification used here for the more pragmatic reason that there is little published data relating to Romania that allows a meaningful comparison to be made.

⁸²In the Romanian context Alina Mungiu Pippidi presents some interesting findings based on analysis of exit poll data from the 2000 elections. Unfortunately the data does not help much with this study since it is drawn from only one set of elections and that from an election where the Democratic Convention’s electorate had all but vanished. Alina Mungiu Pippidi, *Politica Dupa Comunism*, Humanitas, Bucharest, 2002, page 110.

Published classifications of Romanian parties are relatively scarce. Stefan offers one such where he divides parties between eleven 'historic party families' but admits that the classification is simply for convenience and is not underpinned by systematic analysis.⁸³ Bugajski divides Romanian parties into nine camps based on an assessment of their ideological and programmatic positions.⁸⁴ This study follows Mair and Mudde in dividing parties first by origin and then by cross referencing with ideological positioning.⁸⁵ It also factors in coalition choices as a further distinguishing element.

If origin is taken as a starting point for assessing the classification of parties, in the Romanian context, as in much of the region, the most relevant origination divide is a party's position in respect of the former Communist regime. A three-way split is generated between those parties committed to defending the virtues of the Communist past ('radical continuity parties' in Shafir's typology, Communist Conservatives under Vachudova's definition⁸⁶); reformists favouring a managed and more gradual transition to liberal democracy and a market economy (generally but not exclusively Communist successor parties); and the 'democratic opposition' demanding the rapid and complete overthrow of the outgoing regime and its related political and economic structures.

A second significant cleavage operating at the foundation of democracy in Romania was ethnicity. In particular this was manifested in the conflict between Romanian nationalists and the ethnic Hungarian minority with any attempt by the latter to assert their rights in the new political setting being interpreted by Romanian nationalists as moves towards re-integration of Transylvania into the Hungarian state. So, when minority and majority nationalist classifications are added, a five-way split in relation to origin is created which covers most of the significant parties operating in Romania in this period.

⁸³Laurentiu Stefan, *Patterns of Political Elite Recruitment in Post-Communist Romania*, Editura Ziua, Bucharest, 2004.

⁸⁴Janusz Bugajski, *Political Parties of Eastern Europe*, M E Sharpe, New York, 2002. Bugajski's methodology produces a spectrum of eleven party families in the region (of which nine are represented in Romania) which is highly delineated on the right but rather compressed on the left.

⁸⁵The source for the ideological assessment is the comprehensive descriptions given in Stan Stoica's *Dictionarul Partidelor Politice din Romania 1989-2003*, Meronica, Bucharest, 2003.

⁸⁶Michael Shafir, *Greater Romania Party*. Milada Vachudova, *Centre-Right Parties*.

Table 2: The main political parties in post-Communist Romania (1990-2000)
categorised by origin, ideology and coalition strategy

Party	Origin	Ideology	Coalition
Radical continuity Socialist Workers Party	Communist successor	Communist	Left
Democratic Left National Salvation Front Social Democrats	Communist successor Communist successor	National unity Social Democrat	Left Left
Centre right National Peasants National Liberals Civic Alliance Party Democratic Convention Union of Right Forces	Dem. Opposition Dem. Opposition Dem. Opposition Dem. Opposition Ideological	Christ. Democrat Liberal Social liberal Broad centre-right Neo-liberal	Convention Pragmatic Convention Convention Convention
Pragmatic Centre Democratic Party Alliance for Romania Democratic Agrarians 'Historic' Soc. Democrats Humanists/Conservatives	Reformist Reformist Reformist Reformist Personal party	Social Democrat Social Liberal Agrarian Social Democrat Social Lib./Cons.	Pragmatic - Pragmatic Pragmatic Pragmatic
Majority Nationalist Greater Romania Party National Unity Party	Maj. nationalist Maj. Nationalist	Radical Return Nationalist	Left Pragmatic
Minority Nationalist Democratic Union of Hungarians	Minority nationalists	Nationalist	Pragmatic
Ecologists Ecologist formations	Ideological	Ecologist	Convention

This formulation fails to accommodate two groups of parties whose origination was very weakly connected to defined constituencies within society. The first group is the personal or 'vanity' parties which have tended to possess very loosely defined ideological positions and to exist primarily as vehicles to promote a prominent individual such as the Humanist Party. The second group is the ecologist parties and movements. All of these formations have tended to operate as 'boutique' parties with limited electoral appeal, depending for continued influence either on co-operation through electoral alliances, or ultimately on

merger with larger formations. Factoring in coalition preference⁸⁷ and ideology gives rise to a seven-way grouping of parties into families set out above in Table 2.⁸⁸

The ideological description has not been arrived at in a systematic way. Rather it is drawn from a number of sources (self-reference by actors, indications in the media and in secondary sources such as dictionaries of parties and other works of political analysis). The classifications used here would not be contentious among politicians and commentators in Romania although more rigorous assessment of, for example, manifesto content and decisions in government might be less clear-cut. The seven groupings can be conveniently labelled with recognised titles: ‘radical continuity’ covering the unreformed Communist successor parties; ‘democratic left’ covering the parties led or influenced by President Ion Iliescu; ‘centre-right’ being the principal formations involved in the Democratic Convention; the ‘pragmatic centre’ which are parties with flexible ideological stand-points which have either originated on the left but coalesced with the centre right (as in the case of the ‘historic’ Social Democrats or the Democrat Party) or formed alliances on both sides of the left-right divide; the ‘nationalist right’; ‘minority nationalists’; and the ‘ecologists’.⁸⁹

1.8 Thesis structure

This study seeks to test the applicability of the key explanatory variables offered by Szczerbiak and Hanley for the success or failure of centre right parties via three propositions linked directly to their model.

The dependent variable is the creation of a successful centre-right party-type formation and the independent variables are the crafting of an integrative narrative; the creation of a unified organisational structure; and elite cohesion. So the three propositions are:

⁸⁷As mentioned above, a three-way division relating to attitudes towards coalescing with the post-Communist left is significant here.

⁸⁸Appendix one provides a fuller summary of the main political parties that were active in Romania during the period studied but which fall outside the direct scope of this study (ie. those outside the Convention).

⁸⁹Inevitably there is scope for alternative classifications, particularly of parties in the centre of the spectrum. The historic Social Democratic Party might properly be categorised as part of the democratic left since it consistently maintained a social democratic stance and eventually merged with its larger namesake. The Democrats, too, adhered to a social democratic ideology until recently. The National Liberals have co-operated with Social Democratic governments and allied with the ‘post-Socialist’ Democrats. But each of these parties positioned themselves at their origin in opposition to the Iliescu-led National Salvation Front, and I have taken this as the primary defining factor.

- That the fusion of nationalist, pro-democracy and pro-market philosophies into a broad integrative narrative is a necessary condition for the success of a centre right party.
- That a unified structure will present higher barriers to exit for elite actors and thus will be more likely to succeed than an electoral coalition. In the Romanian context it is expected that the involvement of non-party formations in the Democratic Convention would weaken its organisational coherence (by diversifying its objectives and incentive structures. It is also anticipated that the 'flat' organisational structure which evened out power among the various members would reduce its ability to cohere around a single point. And the elite-centred nature of the organisation is also expected to weaken the organisation's ability to endure and broaden its appeal as constituent entities lacked the incentives to substitute their own goals for those of the Convention.
- That the legacies of the Communist era and the immediate transition from Communism would influence the development of the centre-right in Romania by weakening its ability to connect with a broad electoral base but that the scale of this influence would decline rapidly over time as elite actors adapted to the new political environment.

Chapter two of this thesis continues the introductory framework of the study by describing the history of the Democratic Convention and places this into the context of what came next in terms of the Romanian centre-right. The aim is to show how the Convention evolved, to identify the key points in its development and to show how its performance is set into a longer view of centre-right development.

Chapter three provides a summary of the historical developments that have shaped Romania's politics. It goes on to assess the events which led to the initial shaping of Romania's post-Communist party system - the overthrow of the Ceausescu regime and its immediate aftermath. It attempts to determine the factors which led to the development of highly polarised attitudes to the National Salvation Front, the affect this had on the strategic

decision making by the leaders of the opposition and the influence on their approach to the crafting of an ideology. In doing so the chapter addresses to some extent the claims made for theories based on the importance of Communist regime legacies. And it posits an alternative suggestion for the Romanian case – that the period immediately following the 1989 revolution is a critical period which shapes the subsequent development of politics in Romania throughout the following decade to a greater extent than legacy factors.

Chapter four examines the elites that made up the Convention and the tensions that existed between them in the context of those legacy factors. Enyedi in his study of party system consolidation in Hungary, claims that elites have the ability to shape the political landscape. He points to the differing social locations of elite groups at the formation of movements opposed to the Communist regime. These differences result in cultural/political cleavages – particularly in respect of attitudes to the former regime and to the nation - retaining a greater significance among elites than among the electorate and those divisions are then reinforced by coalition choices.⁹⁰ Autonomous leadership and the existence of a cleavage structure that aided consolidation helped Fidesz leaders to construct a dominant formation on the right of Hungarian politics.⁹¹ The significant (and destructive) role of party leaders in shaping centre-right party structures is also identified by Szczerbiak and, from an earlier round of democratisation, by Hopkin. Their studies of Poland's Solidarity Electoral Action and of Spain's Union of the Democratic Centre suggest that even where the environment appears to be favourable to centre-right dominance, the failure of political leaders to unite behind an agenda of consolidation can lead to fracturing and defeat.⁹²

In a wider context, there has been some effort to study the role and development of factions within parties. Studies of party factions in, for example, Uruguay, Japan, Italy and in Eastern Europe have focused on the institutional context in which those factions developed

⁹⁰Zsolt Enyedi, *The Role of Agency in Cleavage Formation*, European Journal of Political Research, 2005, vol. 44, no. 5, 697-720.

⁹¹Zsolt Enyedi, *Agency*

⁹²For the Polish case see Aleks Szczerbiak, *The Polish Centre-Right's (Last) Best Hope: The Rise and Fall of Solidarity Electoral Action*, *Journal of Communist Studies and Transition Politics*, Vol. 20, No. 3, 2004, pp. 55 – 79. For the Spanish UCD see Jonathan Hopkin and Caterina Paolucci, *The business firm model of party organisation*, European Journal of Political Research, Vol. 35, 1999, pp. 307 - 339

and the structural drivers that influence the strength of factions.⁹³ Earlier examinations of factions explored their nature and composition – what constitutes a faction and why they occur.⁹⁴ Transfer of the lessons from these studies to the Romanian case (to the case of the Democratic Convention in particular) is problematic, though, because studies of, for instance, Japan, Britain and the US examine the operation of factions in systems where the ‘host’ parties are more solidly consolidated than was the case with the Romanian Democratic Convention. They also tend to focus on the nature of and influences on the factions themselves rather than exploring the impact of the factions on the development of the parties of which they are a part.

In the case of Romania, the prediction was made that politics – and by extension the internal life of parties – would tend towards Sultanism, with dominant individuals controlling personal patronage networks.⁹⁵ The problem for the Democratic Convention, despite its being essentially an elite construction as set out in chapter three, was the lack of shared objectives among its leadership group. This in turn cultivated an environment in which party-building was not prioritised in a way that might have created a more resilient formation. Instead the elites pursued their own narrower and more attainable objectives at the expense of the consolidation of the Convention.

Chapter five examines the organisational development of the Democratic Convention.

The search for the role of organisational factors in explaining individual party success and failure has been further clouded because authors have focused largely on the impact of party organisation on party *systems* rather than how individual parties organise themselves *within* party systems (and the impact this might have on their performance). Thus the familiar ‘catch-all’ and ‘cartel’ party models apply to groups of parties and carry the assumption that these offer new ‘ideal types’ that parties trend towards because of

⁹³Francoise Boucek, *The Structure and Dynamics of Intra-Party Politics in Europe*, Perspectives on European Politics and Society, vol. 3, no. 3 (2002), pp. 454 – 493. Scott Morgenstern, *Organised Factions and Disorganised Parties*, *Party Politics*, vol. 7, no. 2, pp. 235 – 256. Kim Betcher, *Factions of Interest in Japan and Italy*, *Party Politics*, vol. 11, no. 3, pp. 339 – 358

⁹⁴Richard Rose, *Parties, Factions and Tendencies in Britain*, *Political Studies* (1964), vol. 12, no. 1, pp. 33 – 46. Raphael Zariski, *Party Factions and Comparative Politics*, *Midwest Journal of Political Science* (1960), vol. 4, no. 1, pp. 27 – 51

⁹⁵See section 1.4 above

competitive pressures or social trends in the environment within which they operate. Panebianco's model, referred to above, suggests how parties can marshal the resources at their disposal to maximise their opportunities and he suggests that dominant elites push parties towards organisational stability in order to consolidate their position.⁹⁶ But it is surprisingly difficult to find further analysis of the internal workings of parties in a form that might suggest *why* some are more organisationally effective than others or why some parties (or groups of parties) might be more effective at moving towards optimal organisational structures.⁹⁷ After all, electoral logic would suggest all parties move towards consolidated structures that provide the most efficient means of achieving their goals:

Economic accounts of party formation and development hold that the logic of the electoral market means that unconsolidated and proto-parties will converge on the equilibrium of institutionalised parties. Parties are held to seek votes as a means to gaining office, and will adopt the organisational form that best suits this goal. According to an evolutionary conception, no less influential for usually being implicit, parties should learn from their mistakes, combine and institutionalise or be eliminated from the system... Yet parties often seem to be unwilling or unable to anticipate and learn⁹⁸

Some studies have predicted likely party organisational forms grouped by party family rather than within party systems – as mentioned above, Kopecky suggests that successor parties on the left in post-Communist states are more likely than parties on the right to develop mass membership bases.⁹⁹ Hanley's study of the Czech centre-right does not contradict this view but indicates that the success of the Civic Democrats is in part due to its strong and committed activist base and professional organisation.¹⁰⁰ Enyedi, examining

⁹⁶Angelo Panebianco, *Political Parties, Organisation and Power*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1988, esp. Chapter 3.

⁹⁷Kay Lawson has suggested that political scientists' preference for examining party systems rather than individual parties derives from their greater visibility, their fit with methodological habits and motivations of academics in the field. Kay Lawson, *Political Parties Inside and Out*, Comparative Politics, 1990.

⁹⁸Jason Sharman and Robert Phillips, *An internalist perspective on party consolidation and the Bulgarian Union of Democratic Forces*, European Journal of Political Research, Vol. 43, 2004, pp. 397 – 420.

⁹⁹Petr Kopecky, *Developing Party Organisations*.

¹⁰⁰Sean Hanley, *New Right*.

the Hungarian case, sees centre-right parties there operating with slimmer organisational structures, individualised leadership and elevation of the ‘party in public office’.¹⁰¹

The chapter analyses the decision making processes that underlay the formation of the Convention’s organisational structure and the allocation of resources between participants together with its leadership choices. It highlights the weaknesses arising from a failure to develop the structures of the Convention in such a way to make it able to withstand the pressures of unpopularity in government. This is manifested in particular through the mobility of Convention elites (only half of the National Peasant deputies elected in 1996 were still affiliated to the party by the end of 2000, for example). Chapter five looks at three key crises that the Convention faced as a way of testing the practical impact of its organisational structure and the Convention’s ability to succeed.

Chapter six assesses the approach of the CDR to the crafting of an ideological position. The nature of ideology has attracted surprisingly little academic attention, perhaps because of the difficulty in providing a satisfactory definition. Guido Dierickx describes it as a systematised set of opinions and distinguishes ideological principles from policy applications in terms of final and intermediary objectives.¹⁰² A fully developed ideology will, in Dierickx’s view, speak not just to the objectives of political action but contain opinions about all the elements of the political decision making process, power and conflict (for example the relationship of the state to the individual and the limits on freedom of action). The distinction between longer term political goals and the more transitory nature of policy is important as it highlights the difficulty of discerning ideology from quantitative analysis of party manifestos and similar approaches. Dierickx’s formulation does seem, though, to underplay the emotional element of ideology – the way in which it operates as a form of marker separating political actors whose political goals, both long and short term, appear to be largely similar – a factor which adds a further layer of uncertainty to its definition of ideology.

¹⁰¹Zsolt Enyedi, *Searching for the Right Organization: Ideology and Party Structure in East-Central Europe*, *Party Politics* 2008 14: 455-477.

¹⁰²Guido Dierickx in David Hanley (ed), *Christian Democracy in Europe, A Comparative Perspective*, Pinter, London, 1996, page 15.

The lack of clarity in definition is particularly marked on the right of politics which covers a broad spectrum of opinion and which lacks a draftsman in the style of Marx to provide a unifying scheme.¹⁰³ Dierickx divides ideologies between those that are underpinned by notions of community (*Gemeinschaft*) and those that prioritise society (*Gesellschaft*). He sees nationalism and Christian Democracy as *Gemeinschaft* ideologies and liberalism and socialism as *Gesellschaft* ideologies that reject the bounds of community in the form of Church, village and family and advocate modernisation. In the new democracies of the CEE region, parties and politicians tended to fuse established western ideologies into particular national contexts to create distinctive political positions. Kitschelt points to the nature of the preceding Communist regimes as influential in shaping the outlook of the post-Communist right, with neo-liberals gaining a dominant position in the Czech Republic, ruralist conservatives dominating in Hungary and Poland and radical anti-Communism being the main feature of the right in Romania and Bulgaria.¹⁰⁴ Others, such as Chan and Vachudova draw distinctions between the ‘moderate right’ that encompasses liberal, Christian Democrat and moderate nationalist platforms; radical nationalists; and conservative leftists (unreformed Communists).¹⁰⁵ With some exceptions the latter two groups have declined in electoral significance within the region over time leaving moderates to compete or co-operate in the creation of rightist themes.

While not entirely dismissing the possibility that the new political environment has rendered the traditional notion of the left-right divide as outmoded, Sean Hanley has suggested that there are three key identifiable themes to centre-right politics. Primary among those is anti-Communism but they also contain economic liberalisation and broad nationalist appeals.¹⁰⁶ To these three broad but critical themes, this paper adds three secondary elements in its analysis of centre-right ideology in Romania: religious and moral themes; differing attitudes to the nature of democracy; and views on the country’s position

¹⁰³Indeed, it is inherent in some elements of conservative ideology to specifically reject the validity of such codified, all encompassing, ideological structures.

¹⁰⁴Herbert Kitschelt, *The Formation of Party Cleavages in Post-Communist democracies*, Party Politics, vol. 1, no. 4 (1995).

¹⁰⁵Kenneth Chan, *Strands of Conservative Politics in Post-Communist Transition*, in Paul Lewis (ed), *Political Parties in post-Communist Eastern Europe*, Frank Cass, London, 2001. Milada Vachudova, *Center-Right Parties*.

¹⁰⁶Sean Hanley in Szczerbiak and Hanley, *Centre-Right Parties*, pp. 17-20

in relation to the outside world. Together, these six elements represent the key battlegrounds of politics in Romania since 1989.

Finally, the thesis concludes by drawing together the evidence from the preceding chapters to examine which were the key factors in shaping the progress of the Convention and what are the comparative lessons that can be drawn for centre-right parties in the Central and Eastern European region. The principal conclusions reached are: that political leaders on the centre-right were influenced by the events immediately following the fall of Ceausescu in such a way that they made sub-optimal choices in relation to alliance and coalition building and the organisational structure of the Convention which suggests that critical events can shape the behaviour of political actors in a way that leads them to make choices which do not appear rational; that ideological differences between the Convention members were not the cause of the formations failure since, judged systematically, there was little ideological difference between the members and the Convention did craft a recognisable centre-right identity and that, therefore, ideological unity in itself may not be sufficient to produce success for a political formation; that differing operational objectives led initially to sub-optimal organisational structures (in particular the spreading of internal power evenly within the Convention and the failure to choose a politically experienced leader to drive the formation) which suggests that unified structures where power is concentrated rather than diffused and where a pragmatic approach to the delivery of policy objectives is taken will have a greater chance of success; and that the impact of those conflicting operational objectives was reinforced by the conflict between two groups of leaders within the formation, one of which had strong partisan loyalty to the 'historic' parties and the other which felt its legitimacy to be derived from the Romanian Revolution of December 1989 which further suggests that a unified, politically experienced leadership with clear goals for the formation is more likely to succeed in creating a successful political formation.

1.9 Data sources used

Five main types of primary data source were sought in examining the hypotheses proposed.¹⁰⁷ These are biographies and other published writings by political leaders active at the time; contemporaneous newspaper coverage; interviews; party archives; and election and polling data.¹⁰⁸ More detail on each of these types of source is provided below but the main motivation behind the choice of sources was to obtain as wide as possible a perspective on the events that were taking place.

A number of the main players in the politics of the period have published biographies, diaries or ‘conversations’ with commentators (in the main, only in Romanian) and these are useful because, while clearly likely to be partial accounts they provide a rich seam of information about the key events and the way that those leading actors perceived them – or wished them to be perceived. Published work by Presidents Emil Constantinescu and Ion Iliescu, Prime Minister Petre Roman, government ministers Ion Diaconescu, Andrei Marga, Ion Ratiu, Valeriu Stoica and Varujan Vosganian, National Peasant Party leader Corneliu Coposu and presidential advisor Simon Maria Vrabiescu-Klechner have all been made use of here. While there are obvious dangers in relying published diaries of politicians (especially those who are were still active at the time of publication), they nonetheless provide useful evidence of viewpoints, interpretations and the details of processes that go towards creating a full picture of political developments in the period studied.

The principal newspaper source used is *Romania Libera*. The choice of *Romania Libera* for in-depth study was partly pragmatic – it appeared virtually continuously from the period of the revolution onwards and archived copies were accessible via the library of University College London.¹⁰⁹ The magazine ‘*Revista 22*’ fulfilled the role of in-house journal for the

¹⁰⁷These are in addition to the principal secondary sources. Chief among the previously published material that was used in developing this thesis is the work of Peter Siani-Davies on the revolution and the 1990 election; Dan Pavel and Iulia Huiu’s history of the Convention; Lavinia Stan’s work on the National Peasants and Tom Gallagher’s thorough account of the years from 1996-2000.

¹⁰⁸Throughout the thesis, where titles are given in Romanian in footnotes and the bibliography, the sources themselves are written in Romanian and quotations or synopses are the author’s own translation. Most of the interviews were conducted in English but some were conducted in Romanian and translation made either by the author or via an interpreter.

¹⁰⁹The complete archive of *Romania Libera* editions from January 1990 to December 2001 was examined at University College London in the process of completing this research.

Convention but there is no indication that significant trends in internal debate have been missed by concentrating on *Romania Libera* which occupied a useful political position as a critical friend of the Convention and which re-published a number of key articles from *Revista 22*. The editorial office of *Revista 22* was approached to ask if it was possible to examine their archive of the magazine but it was not possible to secure a reply. The two obvious dangers in using a single newspaper as a major source are an imbalance in the information obtained and the risk of exaggerating its importance. The newspaper was not an unthinking mouthpiece of the centre-right – its tone at the end of 1989, for example, had been largely positive towards the Front. The first *Mineriada* at the end of January marked a turning point, though, and it became more sceptical of the intentions of the new government.¹¹⁰ The newspaper was clear in its support for the Democratic Convention in the 1992 and 1996 elections, and even in 2000 where it promoted independent presidential candidate Mugur Isaescu and the Democratic Convention-2000 alliance over the National Liberals. But this editorial bias does not invalidate its usefulness as a source. *Romania Libera* became a place where debates about the formation's approach received extended coverage and it carried both regular opinion pieces by commentators and in-depth interviews with Convention leaders. As far as the significance of its role goes, Siani-Davies offers a compelling analysis of the position of newspapers in the aftermath of the revolution. He acknowledges an inevitable bias towards the capital Bucharest in both content and distribution in the earliest period and he points out the much greater influence of the state-run television service. But at the same time, the explosion of titles and readership after the revolution created a lively arena for debate, even if it is reasonable to be sceptical of some of the wilder claims relating to circulation – including those of *Romania Libera* which claimed to be selling a million copies by mid-January 1990.¹¹¹ Background information has also been taken from the Romania Country Reports published by the Economist Intelligence Unit for the period.¹¹²

The semi-structured interviews were intended to verify the official and published versions of events with the recollections of some of the main political actors from the period. They

¹¹⁰ See chapter 3 for an explanation of the *Mineriada* and its significance.

¹¹¹ See Siani Davies, *Revolution*, page 235.

¹¹² These reports were available to view at the UCL library in London.

were also intended to inform a deeper understanding of the research questions explored in the thesis by questions shaped around the hypotheses set out above. The choice of interviewees was determined in part by the availability and willingness of interviewees to talk to me. But the intention was also to obtain a cross-section of views from within the Democratic Convention (supported by a number of interviewees who could comment as outsiders to the Convention.) The main focus of the interviews was on the leadership elites because this matches the focus of the thesis. Twenty semi-structured interviews were completed and while they cannot offer the mathematical rigour of stratified mass surveys, it has the utility of being a more practical solution when studying a formation that ceased activity almost a decade ago (and of which the bulk of its parliamentary representatives were defeated in 2000). The evidence obtained added significantly to the richness of the picture. The interviews cover the range of formations that were involved in the Convention (with the exception of the historic Social Democrats). Unsuccessful approaches were also made to a number of important political leaders, notably Petre Roman (former Prime Minister and leader of the Democrat Party), Emil Constantinescu (President and titular leader of the Convention), Dudu Ionescu (government minister and some-time leader of the National Peasants), Peter Eckstein (government minister and leader of the liberal faction in the Hungarian Democratic Union) and Valeriu Stoica (government minister and leader of the National Liberals during part of the period studied). However, these absences are compensated for by interviews with, among others, Theodor Stolojan (Prime Minister from 1991 to 1992 and National Liberal presidential candidate in 2000), Csaba Takacs (executive secretary of the Hungarian Democratic Union), former finance ministers Daniel Daianu and Varujan Vosganian, leading civil society activists Gabriel Andreescu, Renate Weber and Valerian Stan and president Constantinescu's closest adviser when in office, Zoe Petre.¹¹³

Access to party archives was sought with a view to obtaining impartial records of key meetings; to examine campaign material and to compare official statutes with actual practice. Unfortunately this proved particularly troublesome, largely because Romanian political parties have not developed a culture of maintaining extensive central archives.

¹¹³A full list of interviews is set out in Appendix 3.

Romania's universities, too, do not appear to have built archives of party election materials or documents.¹¹⁴ Unsuccessful attempts were made to gain access to the official archives of the National Liberals and the National Peasant Party and both parties claimed that they did not hold records relating to the Convention.¹¹⁵ Details of party organisation, meetings of leadership groups, conferences and policy platforms have thus had to be gleaned from interviews and newspaper archives instead. It was also possible to access a small personal collection of party material (mainly manifestos) from the period and the Civic Alliance maintains an archive section from the period on its website (formation statutes, press statements and policy papers) which proved useful. Limited amounts of archive material of this type is also available on the websites of the Hungarian Democratic Union, the Union of Right Forces and the Coposu and Ratiu foundations.¹¹⁶

The main focus of this thesis is on the organisational structure of the Democratic Convention and its leadership elites rather than on its electorate. As such, data relating to demographics and voter behaviour are of secondary importance. Comprehensive election data is available on-line, either via Essex University's excellent and detailed regional election results database, or via the official results published by the various Romanian Central Election Bureaux.¹¹⁷ Opinion polling was a developing industry through the period examined here and records are incomplete. None of the leading polling organisations holds a comprehensive archive of polling results online (and none of those approached responded to requests for access to archive records.) Polling data that is referred to here is thus largely taken from those polls that were published intermittently in the media during the period and in published secondary accounts.

¹¹⁴Approaches were made to the heads of the politics departments at the University of Bucharest, the National School of Political Science (SNSPA) and the Rector of Cluj University, all of whom confirmed that their institutions did not maintain such archives.

¹¹⁵Approaches were made to Dan Motreanu, General Secretary of the National Liberal Party and to Virgil Petrescu, vice president of the National Peasant Party.

¹¹⁶Website addresses are given in the bibliography

¹¹⁷A Central Election Bureau is established for each round of national elections. Results published by the bureaux are available online for 1996 and 2000.

Chapter 2: The Convention and beyond - the evolution of the Romanian centre-right 1991 to 2008

The aim of this chapter is to set the growth and decline of the Democratic Convention into the wider context of the evolution of Romania's post-Communist centre-right. It does so by tracing the electoral performance of the Convention and its successors on the centre-right. Published systematic analysis of elections and electorates is extremely scarce for Romania: the only substantial studies currently available cover the elections of 2008 and 2009.¹¹⁸ Reliable and detailed polling data is also largely absent for the 1990s.¹¹⁹ County-level voting figures are available, though, which can give some useful indicators to the development of the Convention's electoral base. So too can the small number of academic studies which tend to focus on limited areas.

Political developments in the period prior to the formation of the Convention in 1991 are covered in detail in chapter three so this chapter deals with the period from the Convention's formation to the presidential elections of 2009.

The Democratic Convention was an electoral alliance that was formed as an umbrella for the democratic opposition in 1991 and was consigned to history with the spectacular electoral defeat of November 2000, after which it ceased to exist. Its membership was fluid and was united by a single factor – opposition to the Communist-successor left (specifically, that part led by Ion Iliescu). Organisationally it appeared to be weak, operationally intermittent, unfocused and limited in scope. It did, though, establish itself as the principal force on the centre-right of Romanian politics and win the 1996 elections only to collapse four years later. It was an electoral alliance that was deliberately crafted by existing parties some two years after the fall of Communism which marks it out from 'movement parties' such as the Czech Civic Forum which were forged at the time of the 1989 'revolutions' by those directly involved in the over-throw of Communist regimes. It

¹¹⁸ Gheorghe Teodorescu, *Alegeri 2008*, Insomar, Bucharest, 2010; Mircea Comsa, Andrei Gheorghita and Claudiu Tufis, *Alegerile pentru Parlamentul European 2009*, Polirom, Bucharest, 2010

¹¹⁹ Polling companies were contacted about their archives for this study but none responded. Polling data is cited intermittently through the 1990s in newspaper articles but its level of analysis tends not to go beyond simple voting intentions. Commentators have also regularly questioned the validity of polling companies' methodologies but it is difficult to establish whether those criticisms derive more from partisan political motivations than from evidence-based assessments

was established explicitly in response to a perceived need for an electoral strategy that united opponents of the post-Communist left (in the shape of the National Salvation Front), to balance the electoral and organisational dominance of the Front. Ultimately it was not a success in the terms set out by Szczerbiak and Hanley: its dominance of the centre-right political space was limited to two elections (1992 and 1996) and rather than evolve into a stable and enduring formation it broke up after its election defeat in 2000 to be succeeded by new formations which occupied the centre-right political space.

Table 3: Selected Romanian election results, 1990 - 2009¹²⁰

	1990*	1992	1996	2000	2004	2007	2008	2009
CDR⁺		20.0	30.2	5.0				
PNT	2.6				1.9	1.4		
PNL	6.4	2.6		6.9		13.4	19.5	20.0
Dem		10.2	12.9	7.0		28.8	32.4	32.4
ADA					31.5			
PSD/FSN	66.3	27.7	21.5	36.6	36.8	23.1	33.1	31.1
UDMR	7.2	7.5	6.6	6.8	6.2	5.5	6.6	3.8
PRM		3.9	4.5	19.5	13.0	4.1	3.1	5.6
PUNR		7.7	4.4	1.4				
PNG					2.2	4.9	2.3	1.9
PSM		3.0	2.2	0.8	0.3	0.6	0.0	0.5
Oth	20.9	17.4	17.7	16.0	8.1	18.2	3.0	4.7
	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

* Figures shown are for % vote share in elections to the lower house of parliament except for 2007 (European Parliament elections) and 2009 (Presidential elections, first round)

+ Abbreviations: CDR = Democratic Convention; PNT = National Peasant Party; PNL = National Liberals; Dem = Democrat Party (in 1992, the Petre Roman faction of the National Salvation Front, in 1996 the Union of Social Democrats, in 2008 and 2009, the Democrat Liberal Party); ADA = Truth and Justice Alliance (between the Democrat Party and the National Liberal Party); PSD/FSN = the Iliescu-led left in its various incarnations (National Salvation Front through to Social Democrat Party); UDMR = Hungarian Democratic Union; PRM = Greater Romania Party; PUNR = National Unity Party; PNG = New Generation Party; PSM = Socialist Workers Party (Socialist Alliance from 2004); Oth = others. Further details of the parties are given in appendix one.

After the Convention ceased to exist, the civil society organisations which had formed part of its original structure withdrew from direct participation in electoral contests. Following

¹²⁰ Source for election results between 1990 and 2000:

<http://www2.essex.ac.uk/elect/database/indexCountry.asp?country=ROMANIA&opt=elc> accessed 2

September 2010. Source for 2004: <http://www.bec2004.ro/> accessed 2 September 2010. Source for 2007:

<http://www.bec2007pe.ro/rezultate.html> accessed 2 September 2010; Source for 2008:

<http://www.becparlamentare2008.ro/> accessed 2 September 2010; Source for 2009: <http://www.bec2009p.ro/> accessed 2 September 2010

the 2000 elections the National Peasant Party retreated into factional in-fighting and electoral marginality.¹²¹ Two national parties which had formed part of the previous governing coalition retained parliamentary representation: the National Liberal Party and the Democrat Party.¹²² This chapter briefly continues the examination of the centre-right up to the elections of 2009 (by which time the Democrats appeared to have established themselves as a stable and dominant force on the centre right) as a means of setting the Convention's history in context.

Table 4: Party members of the Democratic Convention at the national elections of 1992, 1996 and 2000 (civic society organisations not shown)

	1992	1996	2000
National Peasant Party	X	X	X
National Liberal Party		X	
National Liberal Party – Democratic Convention	X	X	
Civic Alliance Party	X		
Hungarian Democratic Union	X		
'Historic' Social Democratic Party	X		
Ecologist Party	X	X	
Ecologist Movement		X	
Ecologist Federation			X
National Christian Democratic Alliance			X
Moldovan Party			X
Union of Right Forces			X

2.1 Balancing act – the formation of the Democratic Convention

The shock of defeat in the 1990 elections and the attacks on party offices and on student protesters in Bucharest's University Square in the early months of that year prompted the first moves towards co-operation among the 'democratic opposition'. Civic society activists – some of whom had initially been involved in the governing structures of the National Salvation Front – took the lead in creating a broad opposition structure. The publication of the Timisoara Declaration in March 1990 was a key event in the shaping of the new political divide between supporters and opponents of the National Salvation

¹²¹ See Lavinia Stan, *From Riches To Rags: The Romanian National Christian Democrat Party*, East European Quarterly, 39 (2), pp. 179-227, 2005, for an extensive study of the National Peasant Party after 2000

¹²² The Hungarian Democratic Union also retained its parliamentary representation, but its electoral appeal was limited to less than one in ten of the electorate and, as such, is not a genuinely national party

Front.¹²³ The first national convention of the Democratic Anti-Totalitarian Forum was held in Cluj in October 1990 – President Emil Constantinescu identifies this event (organised on the initiative of dissident poet Doina Cornea), together with Corneliu Coposu’s vision and his own leadership of the formation as the three factors which contributed most to the development of the Convention.¹²⁴ Co-operation between the parties followed in the form of the National Convention for the Installation of Democracy in December 1990. The National Convention for the Installation of Democracy agreement was signed by the leaders of the National Peasant Party, the National Liberals, the (historic) Social Democrats, the Hungarian Democratic Union, the Ecology Party and the Ecological Movement (actually a party). The Civic Alliance Party joined after that party was formed in the summer of 1991.¹²⁵

The Democratic Convention itself was launched on 13th November 1991, in the wake of another miners’ march on Bucharest and the consequent fall of the Petre Roman government. The original member organisations of the National Convention for the Installation of Democracy were joined by two other small parties and, crucially for the subsequent development of the formation, by a range of civic society organisations. Principal among these were the Association of Former Political Prisoners, the World Union of Free Romanians and the Civic Alliance.¹²⁶ The World Union of Free Romanians was a US-based organisation that provided a voice for the diaspora during the Communist era.¹²⁷ It was valued for its links with Western governments and politicians.¹²⁸ The Association of Former Political Prisoners was formed after the fall of Ceausescu to represent the interests

¹²³ Csaba Takacs (interview, Cluj, January 2009), points to the importance of the Timisoara Declaration in that it crystallised opposition to the Front’s decision to contest the forthcoming elections as a political party. The thirteen points of the Declaration were a manifesto for those who believed that the spirit of the revolution of December 1989 had been betrayed by the continued occupation of power structures by ex-Communists. It is reproduced as Appendix 3 of Pavel and Huiu, pp. 515 – 518.

¹²⁴ Emil Constantinescu, *Time of Tearing Down, Time of Building*, Universalia, Bucharest, 2005, p. 250.

¹²⁵ Pavel and Huiu, pp. 79 – 80.

¹²⁶ Pavel and Huiu, pp. 89 – 91.

¹²⁷ Details of its influence can be found in the memoirs of Simona Vrabiescu-Kleckner, a leading member of the organisation and adviser to President Constantinescu after his election. Simona Maria Vrabiescu-Kleckner, *O Marturie Provocata*, Themis, Bucharest, 2004.

¹²⁸ Interview with Csaba Takacs, January 2009, Cluj.

of political detainees.¹²⁹ The influence of these groups on the Conventions ideological positioning and policy programme is explored in subsequent chapters.

2.2 Learning from defeat: the Convention's electoral performance in 1992 and 1996

The uniting of the main opposition parties into the Democratic Convention in the autumn of 1991 coincided with a growing conflict between President Ion Iliescu and Prime Minister Petre Roman - a conflict which eventually split the Front and changed substantially the competitive environment in which the Convention operated. Roman was dismissed as Prime Minister on 26th September 1991 but he retained control of the National Salvation Front's leadership structures.¹³⁰ Front politicians who favoured a more rapid reform programme coalesced around Roman and in March 1992 the Front held a critical national congress where competing reform and conservative political programmes were debated. Initially, the Roman faction retained the name the National Salvation Front but they later changed to the Democrat Party. The Iliescu faction adopted the name the Democratic National Salvation Front before later changing to the Social Democratic Party.

The local elections held in February 1992 were a significant staging post towards the general election due in the autumn.¹³¹ They also provided the Convention's first major test of organisational unity. Diaconescu states that the selection of common lists for the council elections and joint candidates for the mayoralities was a substantial problem, in part (according to Diaconescu) because opinion polls showed a shift in popular support from the National Liberals to the National Peasants since the former joined the Stolojan government. In the end, apart from where independent candidates were recruited, the allocations between the National Liberals and the National Peasants were made based on the election results of 1990 with some adjustment for the most recent opinion polls.¹³²

The first round of voting (electing mayors, county and community councils) took place on 9th February, the second round (run-offs in mayoral elections where no candidate had won

¹²⁹ The organisation University Solidarity was also important as a source of support among intellectuals. Emil Constantinescu was a member of this organisation. Interview with Valerian Stan, Executive member of the Civic Alliance, February 2009, Bucharest

¹³⁰ Demisia Guvernului, *Romania Libera*, 27th September 1991, page 1.

¹³¹ Diaconescu describes the elections as having 'great importance' for the Convention because they represented the 'first examination of the Convention by the electorate.' Ion Diaconescu, *Revolutie*, page 97.

¹³² Ion Diaconescu, *Revolutie*, page 98.

50% of the vote in the first ballot) took place a fortnight later. The National Salvation Front – still united as an organisation despite the conflict between Roman and Iliescu – polled the most votes but their support had halved since the parliamentary elections of May 1990. The Convention scored a creditable result and achieved notable successes in the mayoral elections over the two rounds of voting – winning the big city mayoralities of Bucharest (and all six of Bucharest’s ‘sector’ mayors), Timisoara, Bacau, Brasov, Sibiu, Constanta, Ploiesti and Arad.¹³³

Table 5: Local election results 1992 - seats won on County Councils (consilieri judeteni)¹³⁴

Party	%
National Salvation Front	33.9
Democratic Convention	23.8
Democratic Agrarian Party	12.4
Democratic Union of Hungarians	7.1
Romanian National Unity Party	4.7
Ecologist Movement	2.0
National Liberals ¹³⁵	1.8
National Liberal – Youth Wing	1.0
Greater Romania Party	0.9
Others	12.4

Despite its success in the local government elections, the Convention was still a fragile entity. The National Liberal leadership in particular did not seem convinced that the Convention offered the best strategic choice for achieving its goals: the party’s decision to participate in the provisional government set up to follow Roman’s administration was a major source of tension within the Convention.¹³⁶ National Peasant vice president Ion Diaconescu recounts the tragi-comic attempt to hold a press conference to celebrate the election results which underlines the tensions between the main parties in the Convention and presaged the departure of the National Liberals from the formation. As the formation’s leadership gathered at Convention headquarters together with press and television journalists it became clear that the new (National Liberal) mayor of Bucharest, Crin

¹³³ Stan Stoica, *Dupa '89*, page 51.

¹³⁴ Stan Stoica, *Romania Dupa 1989*, pp. 243-244

¹³⁵ Where running independently of the Convention banner

¹³⁶ See chapter 3 below.

Halaicu, was not among them. Diaconescu eventually established that Halaicu had called a work meeting of all the Bucharest sector (district) mayors timed to coincide with the press conference. National Liberal leader Radu Campeanu could not be reached on the telephone but eventually it was decided to move the entire press conference from the Convention offices to City Hall. Two days later the National Liberals held their own celebration press conference.¹³⁷

The period between the local elections and the presidential and parliamentary polls held in September 1992 was a turbulent one in political terms. The National Salvation Front completed its split between the Roman and Iliescu camps; the Convention itself suffered a major split as the National Liberals opted to contest the general election on their own platform; and the constitutional question re-appeared when the exiled king, Michael, was finally allowed to visit the country in the spring. Success and even survival for the Convention were far from secured: it faced significant competition from four directions in this period, the Iliescu and Roman parties, the nationalist right and, following the internal split, from the National Liberals too.

The first task in the wake of the local elections was the selection of candidates for the parliamentary and presidential polls. The selection of parliamentary candidates could have presented a major hurdle for the Convention.¹³⁸ It was agreed that one third of the candidates would be National Liberals, one third National Peasants, half of the remainder would be drawn from the Civic Alliance Party and the rest from the historic Social Democrats and the Ecology Party.¹³⁹ Although the formula was accepted, Radu Campeanu engineered the departure of the National Liberals from the Convention shortly afterwards in April 1992, less than six months before the parliamentary and presidential elections.¹⁴⁰

Despite the crowded political field and the best efforts of the National Liberals to change the dynamic of the election campaign (by announcing it had approached King Michael to

¹³⁷ Diaconescu, *Revolutie*, page 99.

¹³⁸ The selection of Emil Constantinescu as the Convention's presidential candidate is covered in more detail in chapter 3 below.

¹³⁹ Ion Diaconescu, *Revolutie*, page 100.

¹⁴⁰ A faction of the National Liberals led by Nicolae Cervenii remained within the Convention and the National Liberal Youth Wing applied to join the formation after Campeanu's followers left.

be its presidential candidate)¹⁴¹, by the start of the official campaign period the Convention appeared to have consolidated its position as principal challenger to Iliescu and his party.¹⁴² The campaign for Radu Campeanu's party ran well behind that of the Convention.¹⁴³ The nationalist right was organisationally weak with its support geographically concentrated and lacking a credible national leader despite Gheorghe Funar's success in Cluj.¹⁴⁴

Following the split between Roman and Iliescu, the Roman faction chose its own candidate for the 1992 presidential election. The leading actors in the Front's internal rupture cast it as a contest between two forms of social democracy – popularly referred to as the 'war of the roses'.¹⁴⁵ But the electorate paid little attention to the nuances of left-right delineation and the Roman faction was bound to attack Iliescu from the right.¹⁴⁶ The Roman faction, though, made an immense miscalculation which effectively handed Emil Constantinescu the role of leading challenger to Ion Iliescu: the party chose the unknown academic scientist Caius Dragomir as its presidential candidate. Petre Roman decided not to put his name forward to be candidate, explaining his decision as not wishing to damage the party at its birth (presumably because he saw himself as a divisive figure).¹⁴⁷ Whatever the reasoning behind the decision it robbed the party of its main electoral asset – Petre Roman's name recognition. Roman came close to achieving second place in the 1996 elections but it is only possible to speculate on the outcome – and its long term effects - had Roman run against the unknown electoral novice Constantinescu in 1992. Six candidates entered the presidential contest. In addition to Iliescu, Dragomir, Constantinescu and Funar there was an independent candidate and a representative of the tiny Republican Party. Iliescu topped the poll but having failed to win a majority in the first ballot was forced into a run-off with Constantinescu.

¹⁴¹ See chapter 3 below.

¹⁴² The Romanian polling industry was barely developed at this stage and there is little firm evidence to map the evolution of party support over the period.

¹⁴³ In this election the National Liberals were without the backing of civil society groups, significant media outlets or even the Hungarian minority (as Campeanu had enjoyed in 1990).

¹⁴⁴ The nationalist vote was also divided between Funar's National Unity Party and the Greater Romania Party of Corneliu Vadim Tudor which gained from the defection of a dozen Front parliamentarians when the Roman-Iliescu split was formalised. Tom Gallagher, *Theft*, page 104.

¹⁴⁵ Florin Abraham, *Romania de la Comunism la Capitalism*, Tritonic, Bucharest, 2006, page 59.

¹⁴⁶ Caius Dragomir, for example, the Roman faction's presidential candidate attacked Iliescu for signing a co-operation treaty with the Soviet Union because it meant renouncing Romanian claims over the region of Bessarabia. Cine va fi candidatul FSN la presedintie?, *Romania Libera*, 2 July 1992, page 3.

¹⁴⁷ Conventia Nationala Extraordinara a FSN, *Romania Libera*, 27 July 1992, page 2.

Table 6: Presidential election result September/October 1992¹⁴⁸

	Round I		Round II	
Candidate	Vote	%	Vote	%
Ion Iliescu (Democratic National Salvation Front)	5 633 465	47.3	7 393 429	61.4
Emil Constantinescu (Democratic Convention)	3 717 006	31.2	4 641 207	38.6
Gheorghe Funar (National Unity Party)	1 294 388	10.9		
Caius Dragomir (National Salvation Front)	564 655	4.8		
Ion Manzatu (Republican Party)	362 485	3.1		
Mircea Druc (Independent)	326 866	2.8		

Table 7: Parliamentary election results September 1992¹⁴⁹

Party	Votes*	%*	Deputies elected	Senators elected
Democratic National Salvation Front	3 015 708	27.7	117	49
Democratic Convention	2 177 144	20.0	82	34
National Salvation Front	1 108 500	10.2	43	18
National Unity Party	839 586	7.7	30	14
Hungarian Democratic Union	811 290	7.5	27	12
Greater Romania Party	424 061	3.9	16	6
Socialist Workers' Party	330 378	3.0	13	5
Democratic Agrarian Party	326 289	2.9	0	5
National Liberal Party	286 467	2.6	0	0
Others		14.5	13**	0

* Votes cast in elections to Chamber of Deputies

** Seats allocated to national minorities

Both Ratiu and Diaconescu state that the 1992 elections were a success because of the substantial advance over the results in 1990.¹⁵⁰ Constantinescu's performance attracted some criticism but his supporters pointed out that the first IMAS poll after his selection as candidate in the summer of 1992 gave him 13% support and that the 38.6% that he eventually achieved in the second round of voting for the presidency represented a significant increase in that score.¹⁵¹ The result was good enough to consolidate

¹⁴⁸ Stan Stoica, *Dupa '89*, page 240.

¹⁴⁹ Stan Stoica, *Dupa '89*, page 224.

¹⁵⁰ Ion Ratiu, *Istoria unei candidaturi deturnate*, Regent House, Bucharest, 2001, page I, Ion Diaconescu, *Revolutie*, page 118.

¹⁵¹ Pavel and Huiu, page 150.

Constantinescu's position at the head of the formation. Immediately after the election Coposu resigned the presidency of the Convention and proposed Constantinescu in his place. The Convention's Central Co-ordinating Committee voted 15 – 0 with three abstentions to elect Constantinecu, the three abstentions coming from his former leadership rival Nicolae Manolescu plus Ecologist leader Otto Weber and Bogdan Grabovski of the World Union of Free Romanians both of whom were close to Ion Ratiu.¹⁵²

Pavel and Huiu identify the emergence of a distinct Convention electorate in the 1992 elections. Support for the Convention was higher in the Transylvanian region than elsewhere. As mentioned above, in the local elections the Convention won the mayoralities of a number of major cities and in the parliamentary poll it took 28.5% of the vote in Romania's largest towns and cities compared to 21.7% for the Iliescu faction of the Front. In rural areas the Iliescu faction won 35.7% of the vote compared to just 15.9% for the Convention. Convention voters tended to be younger and better educated than supporters of Iliescu's party (22% of the Convention's electorate were students, pupils or young people compared to under 7% of Democratic National Salvation Front supporters). And manual workers and 'peasants' made up a significantly larger part of the electorate for Iliescu's party (41% compared to 21% for the Convention).¹⁵³

The Convention's campaign was more focused and better organised than the disparate campaigns of 1990. It appears to have made some use of its overseas connections to bring in outside help for the 1992 campaign.¹⁵⁴ Yet it was clearly organisationally out-gunned once again by Ion Iliescu and his supporters:

[Iliescu's party] revived the charges made against the opposition in May 1990 that it intended to turn the clock back to an era of harsh economic exploitation and that it could not be trusted to safeguard Romania's national interest. Emil Constantinescu declared afterwards that he and his supporters had been accused of five fundamental

¹⁵² Pavel and Huiu, page 158.

¹⁵³ Pavel and Huiu, page 146.

¹⁵⁴ Ion Ratiu recounts meetings with US Republican and British Conservative advisers. Ion Ratiu, page 263

sins: bringing back the king, restoring landlords, reviving capitalism, selling Transylvania to the Hungarians and persecuting former Communists.¹⁵⁵

The sense of stolen power and a lack of democratic legitimacy for Iliescu's party persisted after the 1992 elections and potentially hindered the Convention's capacity to learn from its defeat. Even before the elections took place a discourse around electoral fraud and manipulation had grown up. To illustrate the point, after the elections the Convention announced it was challenging the results in seven counties and in parts of Bucharest thanks to a range of perceived irregularities.¹⁵⁶

The imperative for the Convention's members to remain united remained, though. The Convention's parliamentary parties were united in their refusal to join a Front-led government.¹⁵⁷ There was discussion about the future of the National Liberal Party which identified Radu Campeanu as a block on the future unity of the party *within* the Convention.¹⁵⁸ The non-nationalist opposition parties held a joint press conference to announce plans for co-operation in the new parliament but there was no indication that discussions were taking place that would lead to wider co-operation or a re-casting of the opposition's organisational structure.¹⁵⁹ Neither was there any sign that the Convention's leaders had an appetite for engaging in a more wide ranging debate about the formation's future strategy.¹⁶⁰

Over the next four years it was the evolution of the wider political environment which did most to shape the battleground for the 1996 elections although the Convention played a part by sharpening and modernising its electoral organisation further. Compared to the elections of 1992, the Convention's campaign in 1996 showed that a good deal of organisational development had taken place.

¹⁵⁵ Tom Gallagher, *Theft*, page 105.

¹⁵⁶ CDR contesta alegerile in 7 judete, *Romania Libera*, 5 October 1992, page 3.

¹⁵⁷ Nici un partid din CDR nu va participa la o guvernare de stinga, *Romania Libera*, 6 October 1992, page 2.

¹⁵⁸ Liberalii intre agonie si refacere, *Romania Libera*, 30 October 1992, page 5.

¹⁵⁹ Conferinta de presa a CDR – FSN, *Romania Libera*, 29 October 1992, page 3.

¹⁶⁰ Emil Constantinescu announced his intention to take on the role of 'people's tribune' but this appeared to be a personal plan rather than an indication of a wider leadership vision for the Convention (at this stage, of course, Corneliu Coposu was president of the Convention itself so Constantinescu's position going forward was less clear. Conferinta de presa a d-lui Emil Constantinescu, *Romania Libera*, 16 October 1992, page 3.

Deletant and Siani Davies note that the 1996 election campaign was professionalised (with clear evidence of foreign influences) but markedly more intense in urban areas than in rural areas. All the parties employed public meetings and widespread use of posterage. The parties bought newspaper advertising space but Deletant and Siani-Davies note that the circulation of even the most popular newspaper – *Evenimentul Zilei* – was 170,000 from a population of 23 million.¹⁶¹ Television had taken on a more significant role with the growth in the number of independent TV channels. Air-time allotted to each party was governed by statute but although this was, according to Deletant and Siani-Davies, scrupulously observed, there was criticism of the passive nature of TV election coverage with programmes content to repeat party press releases rather than interrogate their claims and presentations.

In January 1996, the National Peasant team of Democratic Convention campaign managers took part in a campaign planning seminar in the mountain resort of Sinaia. The seminar, organised by the Romanian Institute of Citizens for Christian Democracy, was attended by representatives of the British Conservative Party. Younger members of the party's leadership cohort appear to have been behind the initiative which covered sessions on 'the role of a campaign manager' and 'interpreting campaign information' as well as more esoteric topics.¹⁶² This was followed in March by the presentation of thirty four 'diplomas' to the 'first professional electoral campaign directors in Romania,' by a representative of the British Conservative Party.¹⁶³ Zoe Petre also states that the Constantinescu team received help from French President Jacques Chirac's campaign team and from advisers linked to both the Republicans and the Democrats in the United States.¹⁶⁴

At the beginning of 1996 polling evidence did not appear to offer the opposition many grounds for confidence. A Gallup poll at the beginning of January showed Iliescu's Social Democrats and the Convention level pegging in voter preferences at 25% each.¹⁶⁵ The other messages given by the same poll were confused and demonstrated how difficult it was

¹⁶¹ Dennis Deletant and Peter Siani-Davies, *The Romanian Elections of November 1996*, Representation, volume 35, numbers 2 and 3, pp. 155 – 167.

¹⁶² Un partid al interesului national, *Romania Libera*, 30 January 1996, page 3.

¹⁶³ Primii directori de campanie electorala profesionisti din Romania, *Romania Libera*, 4 March 1996, page 3.

¹⁶⁴ Interview with Zoe Petre.

¹⁶⁵ Gallup poll commissioned for the state television channel, TVR, reported in *Romania Libera*, 5 January 1996, page 3.

for Convention leaders to craft a consistent message. A clear majority (59% against 19%) stated that a market economy was preferable to one run by the state but few were prepared to accept the risks that a market economy brought with it: 56% expressed a preference for a secure job that was less well paid compared to 25% who were willing to trade job security for better pay. Half the respondents felt that only thieves had been winners from privatisation and less than a third (32%) felt that further privatisation would improve the lot of the population in general. Indeed, even the negative impact of perceptions about corrupt privatisation processes could have been discounted somewhat by apparently ambivalent attitudes to theft and, in any case, only a little over a third thought that political change was the way to achieve change for the country.¹⁶⁶

Corneliu Coposu had died in 1995 and this had destabilised the Convention (and the National Peasant Party). The break with the Hungarian Democratic Union that is examined in more detail in chapter five damaged the sense of opposition unity which derived from the return of the National Liberals to the formation.¹⁶⁷ A rumour appeared – and was promptly denied – that the National Peasants were prepared to support Petre Roman for the presidency.¹⁶⁸ The sense of crisis generated by stubbornly high levels of Social Democrat support and the internal troubles of the National Peasant Party led the Convention to stress its support for Constantinescu, to re-emphasise that it would not collaborate with the Social Democrats in government and that it did not consider it opportune to enter a pact with any other party or formation (a reference to the Democrat Party and the Union of Social Democrats – the alliance that the Democrats had formed with the historic Social Democrats after the latter party left the Convention).¹⁶⁹

The government led by Prime Minister Nicolae Vacaroiu was built on a coalition between Iliescu's party (by now called the Social Democrats), the far left and the far right.¹⁷⁰ It was unstable and was perceived as damaging Romania's image abroad which had held back the

¹⁶⁶ Asked whether they agreed with the statement, 'regardless of where the money comes from, what matters is what you do with it', 43% agreed and 43% disagreed.

¹⁶⁷ See below.

¹⁶⁸ In *sedinta Consiliului CDR nu avut loc nici o lupta*, *Romania Libera*, 12 February 1996, page 3.

¹⁶⁹ *Consiliul National al CDR*, *Romania Libera*, 12 February 1996, page 3.

¹⁷⁰ Referred to as the Red Quadrilateral, between 1992 and 1996 the government had been sustained variously by the Socialist Workers Party, the National Unity Party and the Greater Romania Party. See Florin Abraham, pp. 248 – 265.

country's efforts to gain entry into the Euro-Atlantic structures that would have helped Romania to cope with the strains of transition.¹⁷¹ Yet it had survived the entire four year parliamentary term. It had delivered economic recovery of sorts with GDP growing 17.6% from 1993 to 1996 and net average real wages growing 8.3%.¹⁷² And by the time of the elections it had normalised relations with Hungary and made the first steps towards NATO and EU membership.¹⁷³ Assessment of the the performance of the Vacaroiu government is not universally negative:

On the whole the privatisation process was more rapid than is widely supposed. Decollectivisation of agriculture was achieved rapidly and the housing stock was almost completely sold off. By 1996, the last year of the Vacaroiu government, 54% of GDP was from the private sector compared to 42.6% in 1995.¹⁷⁴

Abraham echoes this view, pointing out that the government achieved 'micro stabilisation' of the economy and eventual progress in foreign relations. Explanation for the Social Democrats' defeat, when it came, rests more with a failure to meet the expectations of the electorate:

The loss of the election in 1996 can be explained by three phrases which came to define, for the majority of the urban electorate, the Vacaroiu government: corruption, stagnation and lost hopes. The opposition used a single phrase to combine all of these: change.¹⁷⁵

In fact the opposition focused its attacks on three broad themes: corruption, economic failure and drawing parallels between the Social Democrat government (and Iliescu in particular) and the former Communist dictatorship.

¹⁷¹ That perception rests particularly strongly with domestic opponents of the Iliescu regime and with foreign liberal observers. It is difficult to gauge the extent to which the wider Romanian electorate shared the sense that international isolation was damaging the country's progress.

¹⁷² In contrast to the comparative figures for both the preceding and following periods which saw GDP and net real wages fall sharply. David Phinnemore (ed), *The EU and Romania*, The Federal Trust, London, 2006, page 32.

¹⁷³ David Phinnemore, pp 38 – 48.

¹⁷⁴ Liliana Pop *Democratising capitalism? The political economy of post-communist transformations in Romania, 1989-2001*, Manchester University Press, Manchester, 2006, page 93.

¹⁷⁵ Abraham, page 265.

Throughout the second half of 1996, *Romania Libera* repeatedly ran stories painting the Social Democrats as a running kleptocracy for the benefit of a ruling clique. Links were drawn between Iliescu and high profile corruption cases;¹⁷⁶ the government was accused of collaborating in sanctions-busting smuggling to Yugoslavia;¹⁷⁷ and the party was presented as run by a greedy elite ready to trade influence for cash.¹⁷⁸

The Caritas scandal also provided a boost to the Convention. A notorious pyramid investment scheme that was born in Cluj and gained the active endorsement of the city's nationalist mayor, Gheorghe Funar. It is estimated to have involved investments of over \$1 billion possibly involving a third of Romanian households before it collapsed into bankruptcy in 1994.¹⁷⁹ Promising returns of at least 800% on investment it traded on the lack of experience of Romanian citizens and the government alike to prosper and avoid legal sanction.¹⁸⁰ As well as damaging the government's reputation for economic management, the involvement of Funar in the Caritas scandal also meant that the nationalist right was more divided and less credible than it had been in the previous round of elections. Since the 1992 elections the National Unity Party had begun moves towards the centre of the political spectrum which ultimately ended in the departure of the party's radical nationalist leader and the disappearance of the party from the national political scene.¹⁸¹ The Greater Romania Party was also on the scene but not yet strong enough to exploit the discontent of the electorate.

The government's economic record had to be a core part of the Convention's message despite the mixed messages of the polling evidence – economic reform was, after all, at the

¹⁷⁶ Sever Muresan se afla la Cluj, *Romania Libera*, 17 August 1996, page 1. Muresan was one of a group of prominent businessmen who were frequently accused of enjoying immunity from prosecution through both the Iliescu and Constantinescu presidencies. See Valerian Stan's open letter to EU and NATO ambassadors of September 2000 available online at (accessed 30 August 2009):

www.valerianstan.ro/5_Scrisoare_deschisa_ambasadorilor_UE_si_NATO_septembrie_2000_en.pdf

¹⁷⁷ Pistolarul PDSR-ului, *Romania Libera*, 23 October 1996, page 20. The EU had imposed an arms embargo on Yugoslavia in February 1996.

¹⁷⁸ Nestirbitii, *Romania Libera*, 22 October 1996, page 3; PDSR s.r.l., *Romania Libera*, 23 October 1996, page 1.

¹⁷⁹ Katherine Verdery, "Faith, Hope, and Caritas in the Land of the Pyramids: Romania, 1990 to 1994", *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, Vol. 37, No. 4. (Oct., 1995), pp. 625-6.

¹⁸⁰ Vladimir Pasti, *Noul capitalism Romanesc*, Polirom, Bucharest, 2006, pp. 328 – 329. Pasti, an academic economist, asserts that Caritas avoided being closed down because politicians didn't have the legislative tools available to do so.

¹⁸¹ PUNR pe centru, *Romania Libera*, 6 October 1992, page 2.

centre of the Convention's new programme. Attacks ranged extensively over a variety of issues including energy policy (linked to rising domestic fuel prices), agriculture and general economic decline.¹⁸²

The attempts to link the government to the Communist past were frequently personalised to Iliescu.¹⁸³ The legitimacy of his run for office was questioned (the constitution limits presidents to serving two terms – Iliescu was successful in arguing that the 1990-1992 period did not count in this calculation) as he was cast in the role of putative dictator.¹⁸⁴ Romania Libera even made the somewhat improbable accusation that Iliescu favoured the re-collectivisation of agriculture.¹⁸⁵ Another consistent theme was the threat of electoral manipulation with parallels often explicitly drawn with the 'stolen' election of 1946.¹⁸⁶

As in 1992, the parliamentary and presidential elections scheduled for the autumn were preceded by elections for local government. This time, though, the local elections were held in June which gave little time for analysis and organisational response before the general election campaign began. The outcome of the local elections served to emphasise the scale of the task still facing the Convention. The results were a virtual tie between the Convention and the Social Democrats but with neither formation gaining more than a fifth of the votes cast in the first round of voting. Although the Convention polled well in the larger cities its performance prompted further speculation about collaboration with the Democrat Party and the historic Social Democrats who by this time had formed the Union of Social Democrats.¹⁸⁷

¹⁸² Guvernul Vacaroiu a impins tara intra un crize cronica de energia, *Romania Libera*, 14 September 1996, page 4; Statul nu are bani sa cumpere porumbul taranilor, *Romania Libera*, 22 October 1996, page 4; Iliescu mincinos, *Romania Libera*, 22 October 1996, page 2.

¹⁸³ Ion Iliescu a fost aplaudat la congresele PCR, *Romania Libera*, 30 August 1996, page 3 (Iliescu was applauded at Romanian Communist Party congresses).

¹⁸⁴ Iliescu mincinos, *Romania Libera*, 22 October 1996, page 5.

¹⁸⁵ Ion Iliescu doreste colectivizarea, *Romania Libera*, 2 November 1996, page 1.

¹⁸⁶ Recurs la Machiavelli, *Romania Libera*, 9 October 1996, page 1 reported electoral fraud in the city of Bacau; Batausii, *Romania Libera*, 11 October 1996, page 1 reported attacks on opposition activists in Bucharest.

¹⁸⁷ Astazi este posibila anuntarea unui accord CDR-USD, *Romania Libera*, 3 June 1996, page 3

Table 8: Votes cast in elections to County Councils, 2 June 1996¹⁸⁸

Party/formation	Votes	%
Democratic Convention	1 667 417	19.5
Social Democrats	1 390 225	16.3
Union of Social Democrats	962 719	11.3
Democratic Union of Hungarians	602 561	7.1
National Unity Party	461 447	5.4
Socialist Workers Party	439 392	5.2
Greater Romania Party	344 056	4.0
Democratic Agrarian Party	273 290	3.2
Civic Alliance Party	270 207	3.2
Others	2 127 310	24.8
	8 538 624	

After the local elections it became clear that Constantinescu would not be the sole representative of the democratic opposition in the presidential contest. The leaders of the Civic Alliance Party (Nicolae Manolescu), the Liberal Party '93 (Dinu Patriciu) and the National Liberal Party – Campeanu (Radu Campeanu) engaged in negotiations to field a single candidate representing the National Liberal Alliance.¹⁸⁹ More surprising was the decision of the Democratic Union of Hungarians to field its own candidate for the presidency for the first time. The move prompted concerns from within the Convention that their former collaborators were buying leverage for the second round of voting in what was a far from clear political landscape.¹⁹⁰ This may have been the case but given the speed with which the two formations concluded a coalition agreement after the elections it is just as likely that the Democratic Union was calculating that it would give their supporters an additional reason to turn out to vote thereby helping to maximise the formation's showing in the parliamentary elections. Gyorgy Frunda, the Democratic Union presidential candidate expressed this hope explicitly.

By August, the Convention's position appeared to have improved. A rash of polls all showed that the Convention was ahead of the Social Democrats in preferences for the parliamentary elections. Constantinescu, though, was running behind the Convention's poll

¹⁸⁸ Stan Stoica, *Romania Dupa 1989*, pp. 244 - 245

¹⁸⁹ Largirea ANL, in impas!, *Romania Libera*, 17 July 1996, page 3. Ultimately they did not succeed. The Campeanu faction stayed outside the Alliance and both Radu Campeanu and Nicolae Manolescu (representing the Alliance) scored derisory totals in the presidential poll.

¹⁹⁰ Candidatura UDMR va agita problema nationala, *Romania Libera*, 15 July, 1996, page 3

rating and Ion Iliescu had a clear lead in presidential election preferences.¹⁹¹ None of the polls indicated preferences for a run-off ballot between Constantinescu and Iliescu. But the CURS poll gave some clues to the reasons behind the strengthening of the Convention's position: 52% replied that the country was heading in the wrong direction, compared to 28% who thought it was going in the right direction. The leading issue for the next government to tackle was reducing poverty (34%) followed by unemployment (19%) and prices (15%).

Table 9: opinion poll ratings, August 1996, choice for presidential elections (%)

	IMAS	CURS	IRSOP
Emil Constantinescu	32	29	28
Ion Iliescu	37	37	36
Petre Roman	19	18	21
Vadim Tudor	5	3	4
Gheorghe Funar	4	4	4
Gyorgy Frunda	- ¹⁹²	5	4
Others	3	4	3

Table 10: opinion poll ratings, August 1996, party choice for parliamentary elections (%)

	IMAS	CURS	IRSOP
Democratic Convention	34	33	34
Social Democrats	28	30	30
Social Democratic Union	14	13	13
Democratic Union of Hungarians	6	7	5
Romanian National Unity Party	4	5	4
Socialist Workers Party	4	3	3
Greater Romania Party	3	3	3
Democratic Agrarians	3	1	3
National Liberal Alliance	3	4	2
Others	1	1	3

During September the Convention campaign paid particular attention to issues affecting rural Romania (perhaps timed to coincide with the harvest) with a series of announcements

¹⁹¹ Sondaj IMAS, *Romania Libera*, 7 August 1996, page 3; Un alt sondaj: CURS, *Romania Libera*, 9 August 1996, page 3; Al treilea sondaj: IRSOP, *Romania Libera*, 13 August 1996, page 3

¹⁹² The IMAS poll does not appear to have named Frunda, candidate of the Democratic Union of Hungarians, as an option which may account for Constantinescu's higher score in that poll since most of Frunda's potential voters would have transferred to Constantinescu

and election rallies in the rural south and east of the country.¹⁹³ The list of pledges made a tempting offer, including increased peasant pensions, accelerated restitution of agricultural property, delaying of agricultural taxes and increased access to credit for farmers.¹⁹⁴

On 27th October, the Convention launched its “Contract with Youth” at a concert in Bucharest.¹⁹⁵ Promising ‘twelve solutions for the twelfth hour’, the Contract made a series of commitments covering economic, housing and health policies plus promises of investment in education infrastructure.¹⁹⁶ The following day, Constantinescu toured industrial areas including the state-run Sidex steel works and promised state aid for ‘strategic’ industries.¹⁹⁷

Each of these specific programmes was drawn from the Contract with Romania which had been launched in November 1995 and which had been consciously modelled on the US Republican Party’s Contract with America which was seen as delivering success for that party in the 1994 Congressional elections.

The first round of voting on 3rd November 1996 left the Convention with a clear lead in parliament but well short of a majority. Iliescu was ahead in the presidential ballot but Roman’s endorsement of Constantinescu for the second round of voting placed the challenger clearly in the driving seat.¹⁹⁸ The final result was a clear victory for Constantinescu in the presidential election and a partial victory in the parliamentary poll (where the Convention held a clear lead over the Social Democrats but fell well short of an overall majority).

¹⁹³ Emil Constantinescu a semnat “Contractul cu satul romanesc”, *Romania Libera*, 6 September 1996, page 3; Intoarcele la problemele reale ale satului romanesc, *Romania Libera*, 26 September 1996, page 3

¹⁹⁴ Un om cu frica lui Dumnezeu, *Romania Libera*, 5 September 1996, page 3

¹⁹⁵ Contractul cu tinerii, *Romania Libera*, 24 October 1996, page 2

¹⁹⁶ Contract cu tanara generatie, *Romania Libera*, 28 October 1996, page 2

¹⁹⁷ Reabilitarea industriei grele o prioritate pentru Emil Constantinescu si CDR, *Romania Libera*, 28 October 1996, page 3

¹⁹⁸ In fact only the Socialist Workers Party endorsed Iliescu in the second round from the main parties who contested the first. Gheorghe Funar backed Constantinescu and Vadim Tudor left it open to his supporters to back whichever candidate they preferred. Florin Abraham, page 69.

Table 11: Votes cast in the presidential election, November 1996¹⁹⁹

	Round I		Round II	
	Votes	%	Votes	%
Emil Constantinescu	3 569 941	28.5	7 057 906	54.4
Ion Iliescu	4 081 093	32.3	5 914 579	45.6
Petre Roman	2 598 545	20.5		
Gyorgy Frunda	761 411	6.0		
Vadim Tudor	597 508	4.7		
Gheorghe Funar	407 828	3.2		
Others	636 581	4.8		

Table 12: Result of the parliamentary election, November 1996²⁰⁰

	Vote*	%*	Deputies elected	Senators elected
Democratic Convention	3 692 321	30.2	122	53
Social Democrats	2 633 860	21.5	91	41
Union of Social Democrats	1 582 231	12.9	53	23
Hungarian Democratic Union	812 628	6.6	25	11
Greater Romania Party	545 430	4.5	19	8
National Unity Party	533 384	4.4	18	7
Others	2 438 892	19.9	15**	0

* Chamber of Deputies. ** Representing the ethnic minorities

2.3 From opposition to power and out again – the Convention in government

The Convention's victory in November 1996 was hailed as a momentous event:

There can be little doubt that the polls of 1996 were a milestone in Romanian electoral history. They brought the first democratic change of head of state since the foundation of the independent state in 1859 and saw a ruling government voted out of office for the first time since 1937. To the supporters of the opposition in Romania, however, the electoral victory of Constantinescu and the Democratic Convention was laden with far greater historic symbolism. After more than fifty years of oppression, they saw it as marking nothing less than the final defeat of Communism in Romania.²⁰¹

¹⁹⁹ Stan Stoica, *Dupa* '89, pp. 240 – 241.

²⁰⁰ Stan Stoica, *Dupa* '89, pp. 227 – 230.

²⁰¹ Dennis Deletant and Peter Siani-Davies, *Romanian Elections of 1996*.

Within three weeks of Constantinescu's election as president a government accord was in place, signed by the leaders of the Convention, the Union of Social Democrats (the electoral alliance within which the Democrat Party had fought the election) and the Hungarian Democratic Union (and witnessed by representatives of civic society organisations).²⁰² The coalition agreement placed the concerns of civic society campaigners at the top of its agenda, promising to work towards a free, open and democratic society based on respect for the rule of law, political pluralism and diversity. Its second priority was liberalisation of the economy (coupled with increased social protection and a six month stabilisation plan. And the third area specifically mentioned related to measures aimed at bringing Romania back into the community of western nations via membership of NATO and the European Union.²⁰³

But leading National Liberal Valeriu Stoica claims that the Convention was unprepared for power – that it had a romantic vision of government and did not understand the implications of governing in coalition. His own position in the government was not discussed with him before the elections and he claims he learned of his appointment as Minister of Justice when it was announced on television.²⁰⁴ One government adviser talks of ministers 'behaving as though they were members of the Spanish Riding School but finding they were in a wild west Rodeo.'²⁰⁵

There is widespread agreement that after the election victory of 1996, the formal structures of the Convention fell into disuse. President Emil Constantinescu, for example, is clear that the Convention no longer existed after it came to power.²⁰⁶ Government minister Varujan Vosganian concurs:

²⁰² A fost semnat Acordul pentru Romania, *Romania Libera*, 6 December 1996, page 2.

²⁰³ Acord de solidaritate guvernamentala si parlamentara, *Romania Libera*, 6 December 1996, page 2.

²⁰⁴ Valeriu Stoica, *Provocare Liberale*, Humanitas, Bucharest, 2003, pp. 47 – 48.

²⁰⁵ Interview with Liviu Muresan, defence consultant to the government 1996 – 2000, March 2007, Bucharest.

²⁰⁶ Report of a round-table discussion organised by the magazine *Revista22* to mark the tenth anniversary of the 1996 elections. www.revista22.ro/alegeri_1996-3236.html accessed 18 February 2009.

The Democratic Convention didn't function after the election. It had no capacity to give a political dimension to actions in government so each party took decisions in its own interests.²⁰⁷

The governing parties (which included the Union of Social Democrats and the Hungarian Democratic Union as well as the parties that were members of the Convention) negotiated an algorithm for the allocation of government posts in proportion to their relative strengths in parliament. Some critics came to see the operation of the algorithm, and the long negotiations it provoked whenever there was a change in government personnel, as symbolic of the government becoming more attached to the spoils of office than to the idealistic aims of its supporters.²⁰⁸ Poor coalition management and the inexperience of ministers contributed to the sense of drift while the failure to deliver concrete benefits to the electorate resulted in electoral support for the Convention permanently eroding. Even the smallest decisions were referred back and forth between ministers, the Prime Minister, the President and party leaders – to create a sense of lost momentum:

There was a complicated government management structure. There was no policy planning and an extreme reliance on advice from outside. It was a very fragile coalition.²⁰⁹

Government co-ordination was in the hands of the much-mocked Political Co-ordinating Committee (COCOPO) and a Parliamentary Co-ordinating Committee (COCOPA) but the bodies themselves appear to have added to the sense of drift and decision making paralysis.²¹⁰ President Constantinescu's view was that the acronyms looked as though they had been invented by a satirical magazine.²¹¹ Other members of the government agreed that the governing structures failed in appearance and practice to do their jobs effectively:

²⁰⁷ Interview with Varujan Vosganian, leader of the Alternative Romania Party (subsequently the Union of Right Forces), January 2009, Bucharest.

²⁰⁸ Interview with Iulia Huiu, August 2008, Bucharest.

²⁰⁹ Interview with Daniel Daianu, May 2008, Brussels.

²¹⁰ Pavel and Huiu, page 323. A later article in *Libertatea* highlights that government decision making processes were too diffuse and un-co-ordinated with deputy prime minister Marko Bela indicating that there were at least four different discussion forums involved in decision making.

http://news.4romania.com/Cocogu-cocopa-cocopre-si-cocofi_31533.html accessed 13 March 2009.

²¹¹ Constantinescu, page 270.

The Convention had, at its top, people with moral authority after years in prison but they didn't have enough technical competence to govern. COCPO didn't work well. It was ridiculed in the press.²¹²

It is possible that the Convention made a tactical error in failing to force early elections after the inconclusive 1996 parliamentary poll. Following the crisis precipitated by the sacking of Valerian Stan (discussed in detail in chapter five), Ion Diaconescu and others had pressed for early elections in order to strengthen the Convention's hand against the Democratic Party. Constantinescu and his advisers resisted. Zoe Petre points out that the process of calling early elections is not an easy one: it would have taken more than two months to achieve; the outcome of the elections was far from certain; and in any case the process might have driven the Democrats into coalition with Iliescu's Social Democrats which would have simply left the Convention out of power altogether.²¹³

When attempts were made to resurrect the Convention as an electoral force in the summer of 2000, the organisation that emerged was a shadow of the former entity. The Democratic Convention 2000 agreement was signed in August between the leaders of the National Peasants, the Ecologist Federation and the Union of Right Forces.²¹⁴ The formation was later joined by Victor Ciorbea's National Christian Democratic Alliance and the Party of Moldovans.²¹⁵

Leadership of the new formation was placed in the hands of an Alliance Council which initially consisted of four National Peasants, three representatives of the Union of Right Forces and two Ecologists who were subsequently joined by two representatives of the National Christian Democratic Alliance and one of the Moldovan party.²¹⁶ In September, the five parties signed a 'Protocol of Association' with six civic society organisations but none of these groups approached the size and stature of former associates the Civic

²¹² Interview with Andrei Marga, Education Minister, 1998 – 2000, 27 January 2009, Cluj.

²¹³ Interview with Zoe Petre

²¹⁴ Alianta de centru-dreapta se constituie astazi, *Romania Libera*, 7 August 2000, page 3

²¹⁵ The Party of Moldovans was formed in 1998 by the mayor of Iasi (previously a member of the Civic Alliance Party) to promote the interests of the eastern provinces of Romania: Ziarul de Iasi, *Partidul Moldovenilor s-a inscris la Tribunal*, 25/8/98 (on-line edition www.ziaruldeiasi.ro, accessed 17 May 2008). Four mayors were elected under its banner in the 2000 local elections but it remained no more than a marginal political force.

²¹⁶ Pavel and Huiu, pp. 465 – 466.

Alliance, the Association of Former Political Prisoners or the World Union of Free Romanians all of which opted not to be involved.²¹⁷

2.4 From Orange Revolution to ‘the Basescu epoch’ – the rebuilding of the centre-right

Attempts to regroup the centre-right began immediately after the 2000 election fiasco. Two parties which were part of the governing coalition from 1996 – 2000 and which retained their parliamentary representation – the National Liberals and the Democrats – became the focus of attempts to re-craft a credible vehicle for the right.

One of the key actors in the dramas that were to unfold was Valeriu Stoica, justice minister in the Democratic Convention government and then president of the National Liberals. He is seen as both a compulsive back-room political operator and as the one leading politician with a consistent vision of centre-right political unity.²¹⁸ His recently published book details his own efforts to forge a single political entity on the centre-right capable of competing with the Social Democrats.²¹⁹ In it he makes clear that he initiated discussions about the fusion of the National Liberals and the Democrats immediately after the 2000 elections.²²⁰

The National Liberals faced an extended period of internal conflict after the 2000 elections, centred on personalities to an extent but more critically on future party strategy. Chief opponent of Stoica and his unification project for the centre-right was Dinu Patriciu.²²¹ Patriu’s group favoured a more cautious strategy, more willing to entertain the prospect of co-operation with the Social Democrats and preferring the National Liberals to play the role of a smaller but more ideologically coherent pivot party. In 2002, Stoica handed the

²¹⁷ Pavel and Huiu, page 466.

²¹⁸ Interviews with Radoi and Huiu

²¹⁹ Valeriu Stoica, *Unificarea Dreptei*, (Bucharest: Humanitas, 2008).

²²⁰ Stoica claims that moves towards unity were stalled at that time because of the National Liberals’ decision to give formal backing to the minority Social Democrat government and because of the sense of competition between the two parties which came out of the 2000 election on a roughly equal footing.

²²¹ Patriciu heads the Rompetrol Group and is one of Romania’s richest businessmen. He has been associated with the National Liberal Party since 1990 and was a leading figure among young radicals who promoted a neo-liberal economic programme for the party.

leadership of the party to Teodor Stolojan and an extensive change of personnel at the top of the party followed – consolidating the hold of the new leadership.²²²

In tandem with evolutionary changes in the strategy, electoral realities pushed the National Liberals and the Democrats closer together. Bucharest mayor Traian Basescu successfully challenged Petre Roman for the leadership of the Democrat Party early in 2001. Despite the fanfare that had greeted Basescu's election as party leader, his electoral impact soon appeared to wear off. Through the 2000-2004 parliament, he failed to buck the trend of declining public confidence in all political leaders and Democrat support was becalmed for much of the period – by the summer of 2003 there was little indication of the dramatic breakthrough to come a little over a year later.²²³

The Democrat-National Liberal co-operation project finally resulted in the creation of the Truth and Justice Alliance in September 2003. With Stolojan nominated as presidential candidate initial hopes were high. The Alliance did not function fully for the local elections of 2004 as in some localities candidates insisted in running as National Liberals rather than under the banner of the alliance. Yet the results were good enough to demonstrate the benefits of the joint ticket as Alliance candidates won notable victories in major cities such as Bucharest and Cluj.²²⁴ The Alliance was unable to build on the successes of the Spring, however, and by the start of the Autumn General Election campaign the governing Social Democrats appeared well set to extend their time in power and for the presidency to pass from Iliescu to prime minister and party leader Adrian Nastase.²²⁵

²²² A. Radu, *Prefata Unei Aliante*, Sfera Politicii number 105 (Bucharest: FSC, 2003). Stoica acknowledges trading heavily on the political capital of his close partner, Teodor Stolojan – see Stoica (2008). Stolojan was Prime Minister from 1991-92 and returned from a spell with the World Bank to run as a presidential candidate in 2000. He is currently a Democrat-Liberal Euro MP.

²²³ Cristian Parvelescu, *O Construtie Alternativa*, Sfera Politicii, Number 105, (Bucharest: FSC, 2003) quotes BOP opinion polls showing Democrat support consistently between 8 and 10% between June 2001 and June 2003. Over the same time span, faith in Basescu fell from 50% to under 30% and the share of voters planning to back him in the presidential poll remained stuck between 11 and 13%.

²²⁴ See Stoica (2008) and Cristian Parvelescu, *Competitie si Bipolizare*, Sfera Politicii number 110/111 (Bucharest, FSC, 2004).

²²⁵ An INSOMAR poll in September 2004 showed Nastase leading Stolojan by 41% to 24% in preferences for the presidential poll. For parliament, the Social Democrats led the Alliance by 36% to 26%. The sense of disappointment within the Democrat Party at the lack of progress and the internal demand for radical action to re-launch the party is confirmed by a report published by the Ovidiu Sincai Institute in the Summer of 2003. The Institute has close links to the Social Democrats but its analysis of the situation is not unduly influenced by partisan leanings.

The Social Democrats were united and had a convincing story to tell about Romania's economic and political progress. In the campaign, the Social Democrats continued the process they had launched after their 1996 defeat of creating a distinctive mainstream centre-left identity.²²⁶ Their campaign coupled an appeal to their older, rural voter base with messages emphasising modernisation and internationalism through membership of NATO and the EU.²²⁷ It was Basescu's last minute entry into the presidential race that changed the electoral dynamic. The Alliance focused heavily on his personality, his drive and energy to tackle corruption. The one truly distinctive element of their policy prospectus was the introduction of a 16% flat tax regime (which was duly implemented after the election).

Traian Basescu won the 2004 presidential election on the second ballot by a margin of less than 250,000 votes from ten million that were cast. In the first round a fortnight earlier, he had trailed Adrian Nastase by seven percentage points but Basescu's momentum and the strength of the 'Communist Successor' fault line was sufficient to unite opponents of the Social Democrats behind the Alliance candidate. The surprise result of the run-off changed the course of government construction. Following the parliamentary election results, which were held on the same day as the first round of voting in the presidential poll, the Social Democrats had begun negotiations with the Hungarian Democratic Union and with the Humanist Party (which had run on a joint platform and shared list of candidates with the Social Democrats). Basescu used his mandate to force a change of direction in the coalition negotiations, threatening the smaller parties with early elections if a government led by the Truth and Justice Alliance was not installed. Basescu's approach of 'total offensive'²²⁸ changed more than the complexion of the government: it plunged the Social Democrats into a crisis of confidence and gave the Democrats the capital with which to engage in a re-casting of the right.

²²⁶ The Iliescu-led conservative wing of the National Salvation Front evolved via various name changes into the Social Democratic Party. They should not be confused with the 'historic' Social Democrats although the two parties did ultimate merge.

²²⁷ Florin Abraham, *Romania de la Comunism la Capitalism* (Bucharest: Tritonic, 2006).

²²⁸ B. Teodorescu and D. Sultanescu, *Reolutie Portocalie In Romania* (Bucharest, Fundatia PRO, 2006).

Table 13: Chamber of Deputies election result, 2004²²⁹

Party/Grouping	% votes	Seats
Social Democrats and Humanists (centre-left)	36.8	132
Truth & Justice Alliance (centrist)	31.5	112
National Peasant Party (centre-right)	1.8	0
Democratic Union of Hungarians (minority)	6.2	22
Greater Romania Party (nationalist)	13.0	48
Others	10.7	18
Total	100.0	332

Soon after the Alliance victory in 2004, coalition tensions began to appear. Basescu's aggressive attitude towards the Humanists (who subsequently re-branded as the Conservative Party) and the Democratic Union of Hungarians in coalition negotiations meant relations within the government were strained from the beginning. The president's fondness for conflict also meant that he was soon at war with the Prime Minister and National Liberal leader, Calin Popescu Tariceanu.²³⁰

The president's approach was to brand Tariceanu as being under the influence of the class of political barons who had held back reform and efforts to tackle corruption since the fall of Communism. He was aided by the revelation that oil magnate Dinu Patriciu had funded both the National Liberal and the Social Democrat election campaign.²³¹ Underlying Basescu's tactics was a desire to trigger early parliamentary elections aimed at increasing Democrat Party representation and influence in parliament (the Democrats had been the junior partner in the allocation of list places in 2004, electing 48 deputies compared to the National Liberals' 64).

By the end of 2006, the break-down of relations between president and government was such that the National Liberals decided to back moves to impeach Basescu. The Democrats withdrew from the coalition leaving the National Liberals clinging to power as a minority government with the support of the Social Democrats. A referendum triggered by the impeachment process was held in May 2007 and ended in triumph for Basescu as the move

²²⁹ Central Election Bureau, www.bec2004.ro, accessed 3 September 2010

²³⁰ The catalyst for the conflict was Tariceanu's decision in July 2005 not to resign and prompt early elections as he initially indicated he would

²³¹ The bitterness of the conflict within the National Liberals is made clear by Valeriu Stoica. Referring to Patriciu's dominant role he brands opponents of Basescu within the party as 'petro-liberals', Stoica (2008)

was rejected by 74.5% of voters.²³² Basescu supporters within the National Liberals then broke away to form a new party – the Liberal Democrats – led by Teodor Stolojan, which was committed to continued and closer co-operation with the Democrats. Although early parliamentary elections did not materialise, the parties braced themselves for months of conflict as Romania faced a series of electoral tests running through to the presidential elections.

Romania's first European Parliament elections, in November 2007, offered an interesting landscape because voters had the choice between National Liberals, Liberal Democrats and the Democrats. The Liberal Democrats performed better than many had anticipated, but their performance was heavily influenced by the localised nature of the organisational transfers from the National Liberals.

Merger between the Democrat Party and the Liberal Democrats followed the European Parliament poll, creating the Democrat-Liberal Party. Voters then faced four sets of elections in eighteen months: council and mayoral elections in June 2008; parliamentary elections in November 2008; a further set of European Parliament elections in June 2009; and a presidential contest in November/December 2009.²³³ Over this time the Democrat-Liberals and the National Liberals fought to dominate the centre-right political space but Basescu's party consistently came out on top (see table above). Options for alliance building remained fluid but the division between the two former allies remained: both parties formed coalitions with the Social Democrats and with the Hungarian Democratic Union during this period but not with each other.

2.5 In search of a Convention electorate

What follows is not intended as a fully worked analysis of the Convention's electorate. Such a calculation would require a level of data that is more detailed than is available here. Rather it is intended to identify some of the factors that might be indicative of the Convention's electorate if such a thing exists. The table below shows the Convention's vote

²³² Edward Maxfield, *Europe and Romania's Presidential Impeachment Referendum*, EPERN Referendum Briefing, (Brighton, Sussex European Institute, 2007)

²³³ Legislation to separate the parliamentary and presidential polls by giving the president a five year term had been passed in 2004

in the Chamber of Deputies elections of 1992, 1996 and 2000 broken down by county. The highlighted figures show where the Convention achieved a vote higher than its national average. The results lead to a number of tentative conclusions:

- There was at least a measure of geographic consistency in the Convention's vote. Only four counties recorded higher than average votes in just a single election and each of those was in 2000 where the Convention's overall vote tally was so low as to make differentials almost meaningless
- There might be some relationship between more urban electorates and a tendency to vote for the Convention: counties containing large urban centres appear more likely to favour the Convention. Data used by Pavel and Huiu, and referred to above, also indicates that the Convention's electorate was generally younger and better educated than that of the left or the far right.
- There is no clear relationship between average income level and Convention vote. The table shows county-by-county household income indexed against the national average in 2007. This is not a wholly satisfactory measure since the distribution of income may change over time but it is the only data that could be found broken down by county and the broad pattern of distribution is not likely to have changed dramatically between, say, 1996 and 2007. What it shows is that there is no clear pattern that counties with a higher level of household income (and thus the likelihood of a larger middle class) delivered a higher vote to the Democratic Convention.

One other factor that does suggest itself is a link between active involvement in opposition to the Ceausescu regime and a stronger than average vote for the Convention. Only five counties show above average vote shares in all three elections. Two of these, Bucharest and Timisoara, have powerful associations with the December 1989 uprising. Sibiu and Brasov also witnessed popular protests at this time and Brasov was the location of one of the few earlier demonstrations of opposition to the regime in 1987.

Table 14: Convention (Parliamentary) vote by county and average household income

	1992			1996			2000	
County	vote	%		Vote	%		Vote	%
Alba	40091	20.0		79806	35.2		15925	8.0
Arad	69351	29.2		92866	34.7		10281	4.5
Arges	51823	17.1		87030	25.2		12195	3.9
Bacau	46552	13.1		116321	29.9		7432	2.1
Bihor	57096	17.0		80887	23.6		11312	3.7
Bistrita-Nasaud	25605	17.4		52088	30.9		11070	7.7
Botosani	22607	10.3		39257	16.1		6026	2.8
Brasov ²³⁵	78329	24.2		126258	34.6		20698	6.6
Braila	29431	14.4		63101	28.1		4310	2.1
Buzau	33871	12.7		63558	22.4		13130	5.3
Caras-Severin	54609	31.3		73212	36.1		7934	4.5
Calarasi	21241	15.0		35540	21.6		5306	3.6
Cluj	69505	18.5		127828	29.4		20668	5.5
Constanta	85539	23.1		151075	35.4		16916	4.5
Covasna	9413	7.4		9398	6.8		870	0.7
Dambovita	48785	20.3		85234	29.7		6591	2.6
Dolj	66168	20.5		141015	36.2		15791	4.5
Galati	52680	19.1		110716	33.4		8706	2.9
Giurgiu	23177	19.9		36599	26.1		3174	2.6
Gorj	20423	13.7		37252	21.4		4711	2.8
Harghita	10984	5.6		5562	2.6		818	0.5
Hunedoara	44820	16.1		77087	25.5		9374	3.4
Ialomita	18587	14.1		37189	23.7		4576	3.2
Iasi	72606	21.3		121009	29.0		21984	5.7
Ilfov	35990	29.3		60099	41.2		4756	3.9
Maramures	42732	17.9		68462	25.4		11821	5.1
Mehedinti	27203	20.8		52475	32.2		6317	4.3
Mures	25465	7.7		49209	13.7		3851	1.2
Neamt	48819	16.7		71185	22.2		8706	3.1
Olt	27689	13.5		59033	24.0		7002	2.9
Prahova	79783	18.7		173449	35.8		22170	5.3
Satu Mare	40915	21.0		63188	31.0		8386	5.4
Salaj	17028	12.7		32955	22.1		7009	5.5
Sibiu	64574	27.9		100234	38.8		14628	6.6
Suceava	62982	18.6		81397	22.3		12660	3.9
Teleorman	27718	13.0		59575	24.8		8236	3.6
Timis	145504	42.6		176778	44.6		27226	8.0
Tulcea	21842	17.7		38776	28.8		3202	2.7
Vaslui	22194	11.3		58054	25.9		10024	4.9
Valcea	31318	16.2		64681	29.3		9622	4.7
Vrancea	33530	17.3		57820	28.3		6165	3.5
Bucuresti	368565	32.6		575063	47.0		134556	12.4

²³⁴ Average monthly earnings by county in 2007 (national average = 100). Data published by National Statistical Institute. <http://www.insse.ro/cms/files/pdf/en/cp4.pdf> accessed 2 September 2010

²³⁵ Counties shown in bold contain a city of over 250,000 population according to the 2002 census

2.6 Conclusions

Over time the strategy followed by centre-right actors thus appears to have moved from one of repeated attempts at collaboration (between 1991 and 2004) to one of competition.

There are signs that the change of strategy was a conscious one: Valeriu Stoica indicates in his book on the unification of the right that the creation of the Democrat-Liberals was a deliberate attempt to avoid the mistakes associated with the Democratic Convention.

The centre-right electorate appears to have broadened since the Convention collapsed: the combined left/far right vote has declined from over 50% in the elections of 2000 and 2004 to under 40% in subsequent national elections.

The absence of detailed source material makes it difficult to provide a thorough analysis of the Convention's electorate. From the data available it appears to have been drawn more heavily from among younger, more urban and better educated voters. Proximity to the popular protests against the Communist regime also seem to increase the tendency to vote for the Convention. These conclusions are supported by Roper and Fesnic's research which shows that historic factors were more important in determining early voting patterns than socio-economic ones.²³⁶

What is clear is that the Convention failed to establish a substantial *loyal* electorate for itself: 80% of its vote share was lost between 1996 and 2000, leading to its final collapse and replacement as the leading vehicle for centre-right political elites.

²³⁶ Stephen Roper and Florin Fesnic, *Historical legacies and their impact on Post-Communist voting behaviour*, Europe Asia Studies, Volume 5 Number 1, 2003.

Chapter 3: Turning points and legacies: the Democratic Convention's pre-history

The polarisation was unavoidable and related to events of December 1989. There was a natural desire to simplify. With hindsight, there was a blind belief that we just had to get rid of the legacy of Communism and then we would have paradise. This is binary logic bullshit. The world is more complicated. We needed to rely on institutions, not leaders so much.²³⁷

As discussed in chapter 1 much analysis, both comparative and country specific, of Romania's post-Communist political development has focused on the impact of historical legacies to account for its apparently exceptional path. The influence of the Communist regime in particular is seen as key to understanding the dominance of the left, the strength of the far right and even the apparently shaky nature of Romania's democratic institutions: the suppression of dissent; the destruction of civil society organisations; the absence of any reform experimentation; the messianic, personalised dictatorship of Nicolae Ceausescu and, most commonly, the adoption of crude nationalism to disguise the failings of actually existing socialism are all viewed in this context.²³⁸ The first aim of this chapter is to explore the legacies (pre-Communist as well as Communist) that might contribute to shaping the context in which the centre-right developed and to ask whether those legacies maintained an enduring impact on the development of parties through the 1990s. To do this, the chapter begins by briefly tracing the history of the modern Romanian state from its inception in the 19th Century and it goes on to set out some of the key features of the Communist regime.

This study does not deny the influence of historical factors in key areas of the immediate post-Communist political landscape: as explored in more detail in this chapter, the absence of an established domestic opposition elite (such as existed in Hungary, Czechoslovakia and Poland), for example, created a leadership vacuum on the centre-right that was filled by pre-Communist political activists; and the behaviour of those leaders of the 'historic' parties appears to be shaped by memories of the pre-war positioning of their revived parties

²³⁷ Interview with Daniel Daianu, finance minister, 1997-1998 and subsequently a Member of the European Parliament representing the National Liberal Party.

²³⁸ See, for example, Vladimir Tismaneanu, *Stalinism* and Alina Mungiu Pippidi's contribution to Andras Bozoki and John Ishiyama.

(this is explored in more detail in chapter 4, below). However, it is suggested here that a greater and more enduring impact was derived from the immediate transition from Communism to democracy. The intensity of the conflict and the disputed nature of the transition to a new regime meant that nascent centre-right elites focused too narrowly on the ‘story’ and personalities of the December 1989 revolution so that broad coalition building and the crafting of forward-looking narratives was made difficult. So the second aim of the chapter is to explore in detail the events that followed immediately from the fall of Nicolae Ceausescu and how those events set the pattern for behaviour and attitudes of centre-right political leaders throughout the period of this study.

3.1 Nation

Modern Romania is formed from three historic provinces and the region of northern Dobrogea. Walachia to the south and Moldavia to the east were both semi-autonomous provinces of the Ottoman Empire. To the north and west of the Carpathian crescent lays Transylvania which for a long period had been part of the Hungarian lands of the Hapsburg Empire. Dobrogea, which covers the area around the Danube delta in the south east of modern day Romania was part of Bulgaria until the Balkan War of 1913.

The southern and eastern provinces of Romania emerged from Turkish suzerainty through a series of steps in the second half of the nineteenth century. A fully independent state was created from the Ottoman territories in 1878 following the Treaty of Berlin, (de facto union of Walachia and Moldavia had been achieved earlier by Ion Cuza who was elected as head of both principalities in 1859). Following Cuza’s overthrow in 1866, Karl Hohenzollern was elected (as Carol I) in his place and Romania became one among the nascent states in this period whose monarch was supplied from the substantial fund of German royal houses.²³⁹

National – or at least political - consciousness in the new state was dominated by attitudes to and relationships with its three imperial neighbours: the Hapsburg, Russian and Ottoman empires and it is arguable that the legacy of that situation retains an influence today. As Gallagher noted:

²³⁹ Keith Hitchens, *Rumania 1866 – 1947*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1994 has become one of the standard English language histories of pre-Communist Romania

Many, perhaps most Romanians who will not readily agree about politics manage to find common ground by acknowledging that it is the cycles of foreign domination which have prevented their country fulfilling its true potential.²⁴⁰

Foreign policy, and where Romania positioned itself between the foreign powers in their long-running contest over control of the Balkan region, was a constant and significant factor in politics from before independence, through to the Great War and arguably beyond. Deep and long lasting distrust of Russia was created by the outcome of the Treaty of Berlin which had ended the Russo-Turkish war (1875-78) and given Romania its independence but which had also concluded with the eastern part of Moldavia (which now largely forms the independent republic of Moldova) and the northern region of Bukovina (now part of the Ukraine) being subsumed into the Russian Empire. Policy makers retained an acute sense of Romania's impotence in the face of Great Power politics and foreign policy thus tended to be characterised by opportunistic alliance-seeking that involve the minimum of concrete commitments and the maximum of prevarication.²⁴¹

A combination of diplomatic manoeuvring and good fortune, together with substantial loss of life in war, resulted in Romania gaining territory from Bulgaria (Dobrogea) after the Second Balkan War in 1913 and from Austria-Hungary (Transylvania) and Soviet Russia (Bukovina) in 1918. The state created by proclamation in Alba Iulia on 1 December 1918 and confirmed by the post-war treaties represented the Romanian state at its greatest ever extent.²⁴² Romanian nationalists had fought for the independence of Moldavia and Walachia in the revolutions of 1848 (without success) but it was Transylvania that became the focus of nationalist aspirations throughout the second half of the nineteenth century. The region was part of the Hapsburg Empire and was ethnically divided between Hungarians and Romanians (with substantial German and Jewish populations too). The ethnic heterogeneity of Transylvania and the fact that its absorption into the Romanian state was not secured until after the second world war (part of the territory had been ceded back

²⁴⁰ Tom Gallagher, *Theft of a Nation*, Hurst & Co, London, 2005, page 1

²⁴¹ See for example, chapter 19 of Winston Churchill's, *The World Crisis 1911 – 1918*, Penguin, London, 2005 edition

²⁴² Glenn Torrey, *Romania and World War I*, Center for Romanian Studies, Iasi, 1998

to Hungary as a result of the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact of 1939), combined no doubt with its economic importance, to keep the region at the heart of Romanian national sentiments.

Map of modern Romania showing current administrative counties and historic provinces²⁴³



The regime of Nicolae Ceausescu has frequently been noted as among the most authoritarian and also one of the most nationalistic Communist regimes in Central & Eastern Europe. But the independent route taken by the Communist Party had begun under Romania's first Communist leader, Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej. Through the 1950s the Romanian party leadership took an increasingly independent line from Moscow, spurred in particular by their rejection of Khrushchev's plans to make Romania the principal supplier of agricultural produce for the Communist economic bloc, COMECON – a plan which

²⁴³ http://www.celendo.ro/MapsHistoricalRegions/Provinces_of_Romania_with_Counties_in_Present_Now_Celendo.jpg downloaded 17 May 2009

conflicted with domestic objectives to invest in the rapid development of a heavy industrial base for Romania.²⁴⁴

Ceausescu came to power following the death of Dej in 1965. The new regime's principal break with Moscow came when Ceausescu opposed the Warsaw Pact invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968 and began to build economic and diplomatic links outside the Soviet sphere. Ceausescu's programme of personalised nationalist-communism accelerated after a visit to North Korea in 1975. The regime began to assimilate national myths from history and rehabilitate significant figures from the past, co-opting them into the Communist narrative of history.²⁴⁵ The government also developed distinctive policies towards Romania's ethnic minorities: Jewish and Saxon citizens were permitted to leave in large numbers as visas were sold to Israel and Germany, generating a source of hard currency for the regime.²⁴⁶ The larger Hungarian community felt itself discriminated against in terms of its access to economic and political resources, the way in which Hungarian graduates were routinely placed in employment away from their home towns and the way in which the 'Systematisation' project was directed against their community.²⁴⁷

Following the collapse of Europe's Communist regimes there was much talk of the re-ignition of 'frozen conflicts' and inter-ethnic disputes. In Romania, sensitivity about the integrity of the state's borders retained a resonance throughout the 1990s. As shall be seen in later chapters, the political contest between the Hungarian Democratic Union and the Romanian nationalist right was real and at times alarming. Romanian nationalist formations were regularly accused of drawing their personnel from the ranks of the former Communist apparatus but it is far from clear that the nationalist right's strength was

²⁴⁴ See Dennis Deletant, *Romania Under Communist Rule*, Centre for Romanian Studies, Oxford, 1999

²⁴⁵ Katherine Verdery's *National Ideology* is established as a key text on Ceausescu's co-option of nationalism to bolster his regime's legitimacy.

²⁴⁶ Close to 15,000 people emigrated to Israel between 1980 and 1989, for example. Yosef Govrin, *Israeli-Romanian relations at the end of the Ceausescu Era*, Routledge, London, 2002.

²⁴⁷ As Gillberg points out, the reality of systematic discrimination may differ somewhat from the perception but what matters for this study (because of its role in shaping the views of the Hungarian minority) was the perception that the Communist state apparatus was employing deliberately discriminatory policies towards them. Trond Gillberg, *Nationalism and Communism in Romania*, Westview Press, Boulder, 1990.

particularly the result of policies peculiar to the Ceausescu regime.²⁴⁸ Instead, the inter-communal divisions have deeper, pre-war roots and, as will be seen in chapter four, the appeals of the far right evolved quickly to be as much rooted in sentimentalism for a pre-war golden age and anti-system rhetoric than in ethnic conflict.

3.2 Democracy, monarchy and dictatorship

The early politics of the independent Romanian state were dominated by conservative and liberal camps initially cleaved around issues dating back to the revolutions of 1848. Divisions over attitudes to republicanism, approaches to social policy and land reform, the status of Transylvania and economic protectionism also developed. Dynasticism also became a significant factor in party divisions, with the leadership of the main parties often being supplied from within dominant family groups.²⁴⁹ The electoral process was also widely perceived as corrupt and flawed.²⁵⁰

Following the creation of Greater Romania in 1918, the party political landscape changed with the decline of the Conservatives and the rise of the National Peasant Party. Few of the election results in this period are seen as legitimate and institutional changes were introduced that were intended to give substantial parliamentary majorities to the party that secured a plurality of the popular vote. The 1923 constitution gave the king wide-ranging powers and democracy was far from securely established.²⁵¹

Like other countries in Eastern Europe in the inter-war period, Romania suffered from the triple strains of severe economic and political dislocation (arising from the fusion of Hapsburg influenced Transylvania with the former Ottoman territories), proximity to the

²⁴⁸ A survey of parliamentarians after the 2000 election found that almost a third (31.7%) of Greater Romania Party MPs had held leadership positions in the Communist Party – higher even than the percentage for the Communist Successor Social Democrats (23.5%). Laurentiu Stefan, page 123

²⁴⁹ See Robert Seton-Watson, *A History of the Roumanians*, Cambridge University Press 1934. The most prominent political dynasty was the Bratianu family which monopolized the leadership of the Liberals over long periods even re-appearing after the fall of Communism to lead one small liberal faction

²⁵⁰ The electoral law passed by the Liberal government in 1884 for example skewed parliamentary elections strongly in favour of the urban professional classes at the expense of the rural peasantry through the use of electoral colleges and indirect voting. Stephen Fischer-Galati, *Twentieth Century Romania*, Columbia University Press, 1991

²⁵¹ Details of inter-war politics taken from Tom Gallagher, *Theft*, pp. 29 -42

Soviet Union and the expansion of the Third Reich.²⁵² The growth of fascism on the domestic and the international stage dominated politics in 1930s Romania with home-grown fascism taking the form of the Iron Guard movement. The Iron Guard programme was a mix of national chauvinism, anti-Semitism, anti-capitalism and despotism. Repeated attempts to limit the growth of the Iron Guard movement failed and, in 1938, the king (Carol II) installed a 'directed democracy' in which only his own party – the Front for National Renewal – was legally allowed to operate. The Royal dictatorship was short-lived, however, thanks to Carol's capitulation in 1940 to German and Soviet demands that Romanian territory be handed to the Soviet Union (northern Bukovina) and to Hungary (about one third of Transylvania). Carol was forced to abdicate and a military/fascist dictatorship installed under Marshall Antonescu which survived until it was overthrown in an August 1944 coup with the Red Army approaching Bucharest.²⁵³

The left in the inter-war period was weak and divided – in the seven elections from 1926 to 1937, Social Democrat and Communist organisations only once polled more than 5% of the vote between them. The Communist Party was hampered both by the agrarian nature of society (and the corresponding lack of a large urban proletariat which Shafir calculates as just 400,000 from a population of 20 million in 1938) and by its anti-national policies in respect of Bukovina (Moscow dictated that the Romanian Communists should support the return of the eastern provinces to the Soviet Union.) The Communist Party was banned, hindering its organisational capacity, but its opponents also exploited the perception that the party was an alien entity led and influenced by foreigners.²⁵⁴

Soviet military occupation and Communist control followed rapidly on the heels of the August 1944 coup. Given the weakness of the pre-war left, it was inevitable that the Communist take-over relied heavily on the Red Army. Coalition governments were initially installed but any pretence of co-operation effectively ended with the elections of November 1946. Other parties were either co-opted as partners of the new regime or faced substantial (often violent) interference with their activities – significantly, Liberal

²⁵² See Aldcroft, D. & Morewood, S., *Economic Change in Eastern Europe Since 1918*, Edward Elgar, Aldershot, 1995

²⁵³ Dennis Deletant, *Communist Rule*, pp. 30 - 51

²⁵⁴ Michael Shafir quotes figures showing less than 25% of RCP membership in the 1930s was ethnically Romanian. Michael Shafir, *Politics*, page 25

politicians proved more willing to co-operate with the Communists than their National Peasant counterparts. Communist Party records made public after the 1989 revolution reveal the extent of ballot rigging in the 1946 election undertaken to ensure a Communist victory – an event which reinforced the National Peasant Party’s self-image as the deposed legitimate rulers power in the state.²⁵⁵ Following the election, opposition politicians were arrested and King Michael was forced to abdicate and sent into exile a year later. Michael survived the long years in exile and his status – and his right to return to the country – briefly threatened to be a significant factor in post-Communist politics (see below).

It is too simplistic to point to the weak roots of democracy in Romania as an explanation for the difficulties that post-Communist parties found in adjusting to democracy. The same or similar process of collapsing democratic experiments, dictatorships, occupation and then Communist take-over are found in every country of the region. There are specific aspects of the country’s development that have shaped attitudes and behaviours among the post-Communist political elites: the far right drew on the legacy of the Iron Guard; the left attempted initially to tap into popular ambivalence towards foreign powers; within the opposition, the National Liberals were distrusted because of their record of collaboration with the Communists after 1944; and the National Peasants retained a strong sense of betrayal at their being denied power in 1946. But each of these is specific and limited in its scope.

Potentially the most significant element in Romania’s Communist-era development was the absence of a home-grown dissident movement. Ceausescu refused to tolerate reform Communism and no significant internal opposition movement was allowed to develop. There was no Walesa or Havel to lead the revolution when it came in 1989 and there was no body of administrators who had practical experience of implementing reforms who subsequently cleaved to the opposition. The opposition lacked political capital as a result but, as shall be seen, the decisions made by the opposition in the immediate aftermath of the revolution had a major impact too on their ability to counter the strength of the left by making full use of the opportunities and resources they did possess.

²⁵⁵ Tom Gallagher, *Romania after Ceausescu*, Edinburgh University Press, 1995. The records indicate that the National Peasants, led by Iuliu Maniu, topped the poll among genuine ballots cast in the 1946 election.

3.3 The fall of Ceausescu

Romania in 1989 was the second largest state in Central and Eastern Europe (with a population of 22 million). Its population was poor and rural even by the standards of the region, agriculture was overwhelmingly collectivised and there was little in the way of an independent market sector in other parts of the economy. In the 1970s, Communist Romania had been extensively courted by Western governments because of Ceausescu's maverick status within the Communist Bloc. However, the regime's oppressive nature, its treatment of ethnic minorities and its policy of 'systematisation' eventually led to a rising tide of international criticism.²⁵⁶ Ceausescu reacted by cutting links with the West and he ultimately embarked on a disastrous programme of economic austerity aimed at paying off foreign debt which did not merely rob the population of consumer products and services but took the country to the edge of starvation. Despite this – or perhaps because of it – there seemed to be no popular response to the series of spectacular collapses in Communist power through 1989. When it finally came, the cataclysm was sudden, late in the day and spectacularly violent.

The exact nature of the overthrow of the Ceausescu regime is an enduring political enigma.²⁵⁷ It is well beyond the scope of this work to determine whether what took place was a palace coup, a foreign-led putsch or a popular revolution. It is necessary, though, to try to establish some salient facts from within the myth-making.

Firstly, it is clear that the years of Communist rule in Romania were marked by an absence of active popular resistance to the regime or of opposition activity at the elite level. It is also evident that the regime itself did little to encourage reform either in theory or practice. A brief period of liberalisation in the late 1960s rapidly gave way to ideological atrophy.²⁵⁸ While Ceausescu's economic policy could hardly be characterised as orthodox Marxism on one level (it was marked by an obsessive pursuit of national goals – repayment of foreign debt, grandiose construction projects and the banning of contraception to boost the labour

²⁵⁶ Systematisation involved the wholesale demolition of communities and the relocation of the population into more compact and thus more easily observed and managed units. See Dennis Deletant, *Ceausescu and the Securitate, Coercion and Dissent in Romania 1965 – 1989*, M E Sharpe, New York, 1995, pp. 294 - 321

²⁵⁷ See chapter one above (Romanian Exceptionalism section) for a summary of the literature on Ceausescu's overthrow

²⁵⁸ Dennis Deletant, *Communist Rule*, pp. 112 - 114

pool) it certainly did not match the attempts by serious economic thinkers to reform and decentralise Communist economies via market mechanisms which were a feature of other states in the region.²⁵⁹

Intellectual activity was dominated by nationalist themes too, rather than examining the changing nature of socialism or exploring liberal democratic western alternatives, a focus that was encouraged by the regime.²⁶⁰ There was little sign of dissent. Workers in the Jiu Valley (1977) and in Brasov (1987) had struck to secure local concessions in the face of economic austerity measures, but the protests were localised and were quickly suppressed.²⁶¹ It was not until early 1989 that visible opposition appeared – an open letter to Ceausescu from a group of dissident party members and intellectuals, published in the west, being the most notable example.²⁶² The dramatic reforms taking place elsewhere in the bloc seemed to be passing Romania by.

Given the changes that were happening in the wake of Glasnost and Perestroika, it is difficult to believe that some in the governing class were not contemplating or even planning for the post-Ceausescu era. But they lacked the numbers, confidence or organisation to act. The 14th Congress of the Romanian Communist Party, held in November 1989, might have seemed the most likely opportunity to move against the Ceausescu yet the meeting was marked by a reaffirmation of party orthodoxy and of his power leaving violent overthrow as one of the few remaining options for change.²⁶³

The trigger for the fall came from an unexpected source – an ethnic Hungarian church minister noted for expressing dissent, and the decision of the regime to remove him from his parish in the western city of Timisoara to a rural parish which would have provided a less effective platform for his opposition.²⁶⁴ Protests grew in the city in the days following

²⁵⁹ Geoffrey and Nigel Swain, *Eastern Europe Since 1945*, Macmillan, London, 1993, pp. 142 - 144

²⁶⁰ Dennis Deletant, *Securitate*, pp. 107 – 150.

²⁶¹ Dennis Deletant, *Communist Rule*, pp. 130 – 135.

²⁶² Commonly known as ‘The Letter of Six’, the six referring to the number of signatories. Silviu Brucan, one of the signatories of the letter, presents his own version of events leading up to the publication of the letter (and the growth of hidden dissent within the party through the 1980s) in Silviu Brucan, *The Wasted Generation*, Westview Press, New York, 1993.

²⁶³ Peter Siani-Davies, *Revolution*, pp. 51 – 52.

²⁶⁴ Unexpected but perhaps not unlikely. The population of western Romania was probably more generally aware of the changes taking place elsewhere in the region as they had access to Hungarian TV and radio.

16th December 1989 and the local and then national authorities struggled to contain them, eventually meeting the demonstrations with violence.²⁶⁵

On 21st December, the press were informed that workers had organised impromptu meetings during the night to express their indignation at the actions of hooligans in Timisoara. A mass meeting was to be held during the day in Palace Square. The dramatic moment when Ceausescu's speech to the rally was interrupted by boos and chants became one of the iconic images associated with the collapse of Communism.

The following day Ceausescu struggled to control events as popular demonstrations grew in intensity. Late in the morning, a second iconic image: Ceausescu and his wife being flown from the roof of the Communist Party Central Committee building in a helicopter. The momentum towards change was clear. The actor Ion Caramitru led an unlikely take-over of State Television: the means of projection had been seized and the stage set for the final act. The *dramatis personae* took shape: senior Communists Constantin Dascalescu and then Ilie Verdet announced the formation of new governments each of which lasted only a few minutes as the crowd expressed their opposition. Then Petre Roman, a 43 year old lecturer in engineering at Bucharest Polytechnic and son of a former Communist Party Central Committee member, appeared on the balcony of the Central Committee building and announced Ceausescu's flight, the end of dictatorship and the beginning of popular power.²⁶⁶

By the evening the nucleus of a new government – the National Salvation Front - had formed around Petre Roman and Ion Iliescu. Iliescu, 59 at the time of the revolution, was a career member of the Communist apparatus, joining the Central Committee in 1965 and for some time had been identified as a potential rival to Ceausescu for the party leadership. He had been increasingly marginalised by Ceausescu, losing his Central Committee place in 1984 and being moved through a series of insignificant posts but he remained the focus of opposition within the Party. With the departure of orthodox Party members such as Verdet and Dascalescu, the leadership of the Front passed to a group that was dominated by

²⁶⁵ Except where stated, the following details are taken from Peter Siani-Davies' account of Ceausescu's overthrow, *The Romanian Revolution of December 1989*.

²⁶⁶ The details given here are from Domnita Stefanescu's account, *Cinci ani din istoria Romaniei*, Masina de Scris, Bucharest, 1995.

dissident Communists including Dumitru Mazilu and co-author of the Letter of Six, Silviu Brucan but which also included numbers of non-Communists such as the poet Doina Cornea and Ion Caramitru. Uncoordinated violence continued for a number of days throughout Bucharest and other cities and a significant number of people were killed across Romania. On Christmas Day, Ceausescu and his wife Elena, who had been captured en route to a supposedly loyal base in the town of Targoviste, were executed there in the name of the provisional government.

The intensity and confusion of events means there is no clear account of how power shifted to those who became the National Salvation Front, the degree of pre-planning, of co-ordination of events or the extent to which they had control over key decisions. Petre Roman's own account describes events unfolding as a series of accidents as he and a group of colleagues followed the crowd in occupying the Central Committee building. The first post-Communist Prime Minister claims that his initial moment of prominence – delivering the announcement of Ceausescu's flight to the crowd arose simply because someone in the crowd realised that he was a professor who 'would know what to say.'²⁶⁷ From the point of view of this study, what is most important is that by the end of the year power was in the hands of the Front; that among its leaders were a number of middle-ranking Communist apparatchiks; and that the manner in which they took power was soon to become a source of intense dispute with those who felt they should be playing a leading role in shaping the new Romania.

3.4 'Events of January' and the beginnings of the democratic opposition

While the new government took shape, there was an explosion of political activity and of new political parties, many no more than a handful of members strong.²⁶⁸ The number of these parties, the unfamiliarity of their leaders and their lack of structural depth created the space for the reappearance of older political forces which retained a degree of political capital from their pre-war political activity. The three historic parties – the National

²⁶⁷ Petre Roman, *Libertatea ca Datorie*, Dacia, Cluj, 1994, pp. 103 - 126

²⁶⁸ Siani-Davies talks of parties having no organisational existence other than in the lobby of Bucharest's Intercontinental Hotel. Peter Siani-Davies, *The Traditional Parties and the Romanian Elections of May 1990*, Occasional Papers in Romanian Studies, number 2, School of Slavonic and East European Studies, 1998

Peasants, the National Liberals and the Social Democrats, were to form the core of the 'democratic opposition' to the National Salvation Front.

National Peasant Party leader Corneliu Coposu met with other prominent Peasantists in Bucharest on 22nd December 1989 to proclaim the re-formation of the party. The National Peasants rapidly merged with the tiny Christian Democrat and Christian National Peasant Parties to establish the National Peasant Party – Christian Democrats. The party was established at a meeting of over a hundred veteran and younger supporters on 26th December and formally registered (following the promulgation of a new law on political parties on 31st December) at Bucharest's Municipal Court on 8th January 1990. Within a month the party was claiming 260,000 members, although Siani-Davies is sceptical of this claim.²⁶⁹

The National Liberal Party was reactivated at the beginning of January and formally registered as a political party on 15th of the month. Mihnea Marmeliuc was elected as chair and a five person executive was headed by Radu Campeanu, a former political prisoner of the Communist regime who had returned to Romania at the end of the year after a lengthy period of exile in France.²⁷⁰

Bolstered by their sense of inherited legitimacy, National Peasant leaders contacted the National Salvation Front leadership with an offer to support and work together with the new government, towards what National Peasant Party vice president Ion Diaconescu asserted were the principal problems facing Romania: democratisation and rapid privatisation.²⁷¹ A response to the offer took two weeks to arrive. In the meantime it was becoming increasingly clear that the Front was planning to transform itself into a political party and that this, from the point of view of the National Peasants, was the biggest barrier to possible co-operation.

Discussions between the opposition and the Front leadership nevertheless took place on 12th January. They focused on the government's future plans and the opposition's fears that attempts were being made to recreate Communist hegemony. The gulf between the

²⁶⁹ Siani-Davies, *Revolution*, page 240.

²⁷⁰ Stan Stoica, *Romania dupa 1989*, Meronia, Bucharest, 2007, page 26.

²⁷¹ Ion Diaconescu, *Dupa Revolutie*, Nemira, Bucharest, 2003, page 11.

generation of opposition leaders who had been active in pre-Communist politics and the new generation of revolutionaries was enormous. A conversation between Diaconescu and Voican Voiculescu is revealing. Voiculescu had himself been released from jail for political activities only a few months before the revolution and he went on to serve as a government minister and a Senator representing the National Salvation Front:

VV: How is it possible for us, the young people who made the revolution, to now withdraw from politics and for you, the old ones, who didn't participate in the revolution, to take over running the country?

ID: The fight against Communism began in 1944 and we, the old ones, were permanently at the barricades, in jail, illegally, and not just in the days of the revolution. The war did not just consume two days.²⁷²

The problem for the older dissidents was that their opposition had made no enduring impact on the wider Romanian population. The cathartic events of two days in December 1989, though, provided a form of collective absolution for four decades of passive acceptance of Communist rule. Bolstered, too, by foreign dramatisation of the events as a romantic re-run of 1789 with the Communist Central Committee building cast in the role of the Bastille, the leaders of the Front acquired a level of political capital that the opposition leaders, denied a place on the nation's television screens by the exigency of being in exile, could neither comprehend nor hope to match.

The events of 12th January marked a crucial turning point in the opposition's attitude to the revolution and the Front. On the 12th – an official day of mourning for the 'heroes of the revolution' protesters marched through the centre of Bucharest, led by a priest and by the evening a substantial crowd had gathered in Victory Square at the headquarters of the National Salvation Front Council, now serving as the country's proto-parliament.²⁷³

The new government clearly felt its grip on power to be far from secure. Petre Roman and then Dumitru Mazilu – deputy leader of the Front - in turn addressed the crowd, making significant concessions including a promise to ban the Communist Party. Eventually

²⁷² Diaconescu, *Revolutie*, page 15

²⁷³ Apostol Stan, *Revolutia romana vazuta din strada*, Curtea Veche, Bucharest, 2007, pp. 194 - 197

Iliescu himself was forced to appear. He reassured the crowd that the Front was a temporary structure and that a series of decrees would be forthcoming that would address the demands of the protesters. The announcements, together with the cold January weather, combined to disperse the crowd.²⁷⁴

In the breathing space that followed, the Front recovered its composure. Iliescu reasserted his leadership and, ultimately, engineered the departure of Mazilu from the Front's leadership team after protesters adopted him as a supporter of their cause.²⁷⁵ Over succeeding days the promises to the crowd in Victory Square were abandoned as the opposition lost its momentum with the dispersal of the protests. Opposition representatives who had forced the Front leadership to meet with them on the night of the 12th found that their subsequent offers of dialogue were ignored.²⁷⁶ The Front leadership had shown themselves capable of adapting rapidly to the new political landscape and took what proved to be a momentous decision. On 23rd January, the Council of the National Salvation Front voted overwhelmingly to contest the elections scheduled for May 1990 as a political party.

The significance of this decision cannot be underestimated in shaping both the short-term electoral landscape but also the longer term attitudes of the opposition. On 5th January, Silviu Brucan had said that the Front was not a political party and would never be. On 11th and 12th, senior spokesmen confirmed that the Front was a transitional structure whose role was to prepare for elections.²⁷⁷ The opposition viewed the Front as comparable to the round-tables where Communist Parties had negotiated themselves out of power in Hungary and Poland but the official announcement of the decision compared the Front to the popular revolutionary movements instead:

The fact that it is not a political party but a Front, a mass movement, generated by the process of revolution, without the rigid structure of a party, is not a disadvantage but, on the contrary, it can be a virtue, a positive and dynamic element – which also appears to be a feature of our times: ecologist movements in the west are not constituted as parties but they also participate in elections. Solidarity in Poland won

²⁷⁴ Siani Davies, *Revolution*, page 246.

²⁷⁵ Siani Davies, *Revolution*, pp. 247 – 248.

²⁷⁶ Diaconescu, *Revolutie*, page 16.

²⁷⁷ Pavel and Huiu, pp. 26 – 27.

the election but it is not a party, and there are not parties but Forums in Hungary, Czechoslovakia and the German Democratic Republic.²⁷⁸

3.5 Deepening conflict, hardening of responses

In response to the decision of the Front to register as a political party, the opposition organised a protest rally on January 28th in central Bucharest which was attended by an estimated 100,000 people.²⁷⁹ Again shaken by the size of the protests the government agreed to meet with a delegation of protestors to discuss their demands. But, once again, the National Salvation Front rapidly recovered its equilibrium. Diaconescu tells of truck loads of workers arriving in the square outside the government building by the time the meeting with the delegation ended who were intent on breaking up the opposition protest.²⁸⁰ The events of the following day, though, were even more reminiscent of the Communists' intimidation tactics employed as part of the post-war takeover.

On 29th January, opposition offices around the country were attacked in the name of defending the revolution. Industrial workers and miners formed the backbone of the pro-Front activists who mounted demonstrations and carried out the attacks. Demonstrators chanted that they had not left the country (as the exiled opposition figures had), "the Front = Romania, Liberals and Peasants = the West," and "the workers do not want you, to the museum with the fossils."²⁸¹ One well known incident saw Prime Minister Petre Roman address a hostile crowd from the balcony of the National Peasant Party headquarters in Bucharest to calm what seemed close to becoming a bloody lynching.²⁸²

The following day, Ana Blandiana, a dissident poet, quit the Front Council. A week earlier, well known dissident writer Doina Cornea had resigned following the Front's decision to establish itself as a political party. The withdrawal of a succession of prominent non-Communists from the leadership of the Front was changing its appearance to match the

²⁷⁸ Front Communique quoted in Pavel and Huiu, page 29.

²⁷⁹ That the January conflict radicalised attitudes on both sides is illustrated by an interview given by Petre Roman in August 1994. He was challenged to defend his claims (made at the time of the 28th January demonstrations) that the historic parties were planning a coup d'état – he denied making such a statement but asserts instead that the parties were planning an act of aggression against the government. Petre Roman, *Romania Incotro*, Scripta, Bucharest, 1995, page 56.

²⁸⁰ Diaconescu, *Revolutie*, page 22.

²⁸¹ Apostol Stan, page 220.

²⁸² Diaconescu, *Revolutie*, page 23.

opposition's accusations that it was no more than the Communist Party re-born.²⁸³ Many of those who abandoned the Front at this stage, including Cornea, Blandiana and Gabriel Andreescu, went on to become active opponents of the regime. Most did not join the historic parties (Ion Caramitru is a notable exception as he joined the National Peasant Party and was Culture Minister in the 1996 – 2000 government) but instead they went on to form the nucleus of the leadership of the civic activist movement and particularly the Civic Alliance.²⁸⁴

Pressure from the opposition did finally succeed in breaking the Front's monopoly of power. On 1st February the Front Council announced plans to set up a multi-party provisional government. On 9th February, the Provisional Council for National Unity was established to include representatives of other parties, ethnic minorities and civil society groups. By this time, though, the landscape of the political contest had already formed. Even the setting up of the Provisional Council was absorbed into the growing opposition narrative of the stolen revolution: 40% of the places were reserved for the Front with a similar number allocated to other political parties but Diaconescu claims that the majority of the new parties represented on the Council were shell parties and clients of the government, either deliberately created or at best exploited by Frontists, leaving the real opposition, in his estimate, with just 10% of the places.²⁸⁵

Opposition protests in various forms and sizes continued in February and March. Against this uncertain background, on 14th March, the Provisional Council of National Unity voted overwhelmingly in favour of a new electoral law which set the date for national elections as 20th May.²⁸⁶

Shortly after this decision, the political division between the government and the opposition acquired a racial tone. Between 16th and 20th March 1990 there was an outbreak of inter-communal violence in the ethnically mixed Transylvanian city of Targu Mures. Six people

²⁸³ Siani Davies, *Revolution*, pp. 260 – 261.

²⁸⁴ Interview with Gabriel Andreescu, Bucharest, March 2007. Andreescu was a leading human rights activist, briefly a member of the National Council of the National Salvation Front and subsequently led the human rights organisation the *Group for Social Dialogue*.

²⁸⁵ Diaconescu, *Revolutie*, page 27

²⁸⁶ Stefanescu, page 56.

died, 278 were injured and extensive damage was done to property.²⁸⁷ The government claimed that unrest had begun following demonstrations by ethnic Hungarians to mark the anniversary of the 1848 revolution but other reports state that violence started after the Romanian nationalist organisation, Romanian Hearth, laid siege to the offices of the Hungarian Democratic Union three days later. Villagers who lived 50 kilometres from the city were identified as at the centre of the violence leading inevitably to accusations that they had been bussed into the city by former secret police officers now acting as agents of the National Salvation Front.²⁸⁸

Whatever the truth about the events in the city its aftermath marked another step in the radicalisation of political discourse. The notion that, in the wake of Targu Mures, Romanian Hearth's radical position was bolstered by support from the state rapidly gained currency among commentators and the opposition.²⁸⁹ The government certainly adopted rhetoric that fuelled fears about Hungarian irredentism, creating the political space for radical right actors and obliging the democratic opposition to take positions that appeared to be damaging in the fevered pre-election atmosphere.²⁹⁰ In return, the opposition gained willing allies in the form of the newly emerging representatives of the Hungarian community who felt a shared sense of persecution under Communism and who feared that the Front represented a continuation of the regime in a different form.²⁹¹

3.6 Opening old wounds: divisions between opposition elites

The divide between the Front government and the emerging opposition established the landscape of post-Communist politics, but crucial divisions existed between the historic parties too. The spirit of both the National Peasant Party and the National Liberals had been kept alive among its surviving cadres, either in exile or under cover in Romania. There appeared to be little of critical importance dividing their policy prospectuses (see

²⁸⁷ Raportul Targu Mures Ascunde Adevarul, *Romania Libera*, 21 January 1991, page 1

²⁸⁸ Gallagher, *Theft*, pp. 84 - 85

²⁸⁹ Tom Gallagher, *Romania: The Disputed Election of 1990*, Parliamentary Affairs, volume 44, number 1, 1991, pp. 79-93

²⁹⁰ Pavel and Huiu, pp. 47 - 49

²⁹¹ Interview with Csaba Takacs, January 2009, Cluj. Takacs was Executive President of the Democratic Union of Hungarians and was a member of the Romanian Parliament (Chamber of Deputies) from 1990 to 1994.

chapter five below). The genetic memories of the two main historic parties, though, were quite different.

Meaningful opposition activity from either organisation was negligible throughout the Communist era and this seriously damaged their credibility in the wake of Ceausescu's ousting. But while the National Peasant Party was sustained principally by the memory of the 'stolen' 1946 elections and its leaders' self-image as the legitimate heirs to that dispossessed governing class, the National Liberals considered theirs to be the natural party of government from the pre-war era. This engendered a sense of value in compromise and party sacrifice in favour of the 'national interest' – in part drawn from the need to justify participation in the early post-war coalition governments that were led by Communist front organisations.²⁹² Diaconescu interprets the decision of the National Liberals to withdraw from the protests of January 28th after the arrival of counter-demonstrators as the first act of treachery by Radu Campeanu – an indication of the depth of personal animosity that had developed between the leaders of the parties.²⁹³

Siani-Davies points out that the divisions were not simply between the leadership elites of the two historic parties but were also internal. Among the National Liberals there were divisions between those who stayed in Romania and those who fled; the party leadership was dominated by Bucharest intellectuals and it had fewer technicians and foot-soldiers; political dynasties were resurrected as members of the Bratianu family took on prominent roles; and the breadth of interpretations of 'liberal' was wide with older generations looking to the paternalism of the pre-war party while younger activists such as Dinu Patriciu were inspired by western models of free market liberalism.²⁹⁴ Among the National Peasants, too, there were divisions over strategy: in Iliescu's opinion, for example, Ion Ratiu, as well

²⁹² After the collapse of the Antonescu regime (see above) the National Peasants and National Liberals initially co-operated with Communist Party in a "National Democratic Front" government but by early 1945 this had generated intolerable strains within the National Peasant Party. What amounted to a Soviet controlled coup led to the appointment of a new government in March 1945 which included a faction of the National Liberals (led by Tartarescu) but the National Peasants refused to co-operate. Dinu Giurescu, *Romania's Communist Takeover*, Columbia University Press, New York 1994. The National Liberals experienced growing conflict with the Communists through 1947 but the party was unable to escape from the new regime and it was forced out of existence in 1948. Narcis Dorin Ion, *Gheorghe Tartarescu si Partidul National Liberal 1944 – 1948*, Tritonic, Bucharest 2003, pp. 220 – 253.

²⁹³ Diaconescu, *Revolutie*, page 23

²⁹⁴ Siani-Davies, *Traditional Parties*.

as Radu Campeanu, favoured co-operation with the National Salvation Front but the National Peasant leadership marginalised him.²⁹⁵

But the most critical divide within the emerging opposition was between the returning old-guard and the young activists who were beginning to voice their opposition to the new regime. Both groups came to share a vision of a stolen revolution. Yet the nature of the popular protests, which grew from what Siani-Davies calls the raw energy of the streets, was essentially rejectionist and lacking a unifying alternative narrative. The older politicians, and some of the younger cohort such as Calin Popescu Tariceanu and Patriciu among the liberals, were torn between oppositionism and the desire to engage directly in constructing a workable alternative vision of post-Communist Romania, which inevitably meant co-operating with the Front-led structures.²⁹⁶ Large numbers of the new generation of activists opted for involvement in non-party structures which prioritised ideological objectives over pragmatic policy delivery – it was a critical division which did much to undermine the Convention (which reunited the two sides in opposition) when it had to deal with the realities of power in government.

3.7 Democratic Romania's founding elections, May 1990

Romania's first post-Communist elections were a stunning defeat for the opposition. In the presidential poll, Ion Iliescu won 85% of the votes cast on a turn-out exceeding 83%. National Liberal candidate Radu Campeanu finished second with 10.6% and Ion Ratiu of the National Peasants took just 4.3%.²⁹⁷ The National Salvation Front won a more than convincing victory in the parliamentary elections too, taking 91 of the 119 Senate seats and two thirds of the seats in the lower house (giving it a virtually free hand in the process of crafting the new constitution, one of the principal tasks of the first parliament.) So complete was the defeat of the opposition parties that the second largest party in terms of popular support was the Hungarian Democratic Union which was limited to drawing its support from less than one in ten potential voters.

²⁹⁵ Ion Iliescu & Vladimir Tismaneanu, *The Great Shock at the end of a short century*, Enciclopedia, Bucharest, 2004, pp. 90 – 92.

²⁹⁶ See Siani-Davies, *Revolution*, pp 231-232. Tariceanu went on to be Prime Minister between 2004 and 2008.

²⁹⁷ Figures for the Presidential, Chamber of Deputies and Senate election results all from Stefanescu, pp 458-468.

Table 14: Results of the elections to the Chamber of Deputies, May 1990 ²⁹⁸

Party	Votes	%	Seats
National Salvation Front	9,089,659	66.3	263
Hungarian Democratic Union	991,601	7.2	29
National Liberal Party	879,290	6.4	29
Ecological Movement	358,864	2.6	12
National Peasant Party	351,357	2.6	12
Unity Alliance-National Unity Party	290,875	2.1	9
Democratic Agrarian Party	250,403	1.8	9
Ecologist Party	232,212	1.7	8
Socialist Democratic Party	143,393	1.1	5
Social Democratic Party	73,014	0.6	2
Others			18

A number of reasons have been advanced for the Front's massive victory. The Front won the 'battle of the narratives', in part because the government rapidly adopted a series of popular reforming measures, in part because the Front was able to neutralise the potential negative impact of association with the former Communist regime and, in part, because the opposition made poor choices for its own campaign themes. The new government possessed a huge advantage in logistical terms – it was better resourced and better able to make effective use of those resources. A final factor, which became the favoured explanation of the opposition was manipulation of the electoral process by the Front and its supporters.

Siani-Davies sets considerable store by the role of the Front's emerging narrative: that the shift from the language of consensus to that of national unity under the Front was a conscious effort to de-legitimise the opposition.²⁹⁹ This was combined with an attempt to particularise their political constituency among industrial workers. Other factors also contributed to the success of the Front's campaign themes. In the first instance, the Front succeeded in personalising the ills of the former regime in the figure of Nicolae Ceausescu – beginning with the televised trial and execution of the dictator and his wife – and to cast the secret police (the *Securitate*), rather than the Communist Party, as the instrument of

²⁹⁸ Stoica, *Dupa* '89, page 219

²⁹⁹ See Siani-Davies, *Revolution*, chapter 6.

repression.³⁰⁰ The Front's leadership clearly gained substantial political capital from being the visible (televised) face of the revolution. Polls showed 70% trust ratings for Ion Iliescu and only slightly lower figures for Prime Minister Petre Roman. Radu Campeanu reached 30% ratings but this fell away as he adopted a more adversarial position in respect of the government. Ion Ratiu of the National Peasants and Sergiu Cunesco of the historic Social Democrats achieved no more than single-figure percentage ratings.³⁰¹

The opposition suffered as a result of its radicalised opposition to the new regime. Polls showed the disruptive impact of too many demonstrations as high among public concerns, public aversion to social discord and opposition to the University Square demonstrations.³⁰² Opposition to the student protests in University Square was particularly marked, with one poll showing 84% disapproval of the protests, 67% support for the government's calls for the population to come to the capital to 'defend the revolution' and just 3% approval for the attacks on public buildings that accompanied the student protests.³⁰³ This is particularly significant when set against the key place that the University Square demonstrators won in the opposition's own iconography (see below). The electorate was uncertain about what the future held and nervous of radical change. An IRSOP poll in April 1990 found that 74% were 'worried' or 'very worried' about the impact of price liberalisation.³⁰⁴ As one observer summarised it:

Ignoring the distinction between opponent and enemy was a fault ... displayed by the historic opposition in an increasingly vicious campaign. It did not calculate the effect of [its] stream of anti-communist propaganda upon ordinary citizens, especially the elderly, dependent on the existing administrative and economic structures of the state and fearful of any further disruption. Strident anti-communism, allied to a constant emphasis on a clean anti-Communist record, was a particular feature of the National

³⁰⁰ Siani-Davies, *Revolution*, pp. 134 – 143.

³⁰¹ Siani-Davies, *Traditional Parties*.

³⁰² Siani-Davies, *Traditional Parties*.

³⁰³ Daniel Nelson, *Romania After Tyranny*, Westview Press, Boulder, 1992 p. 137. It is interesting to note that later, in 1991, Romania Libera carried a series of articles questioning the legitimacy of IRSOP as a polling agency. It might be the case that, at this early stage in the process of democratisation, polling companies were open to corruption and interviewees were unwilling to openly express their views but such accusations are difficult to substantiate.

³⁰⁴ Nelson, pp.129 – 130.

Peasant Party which misread badly the mood of a people, few of whom had not made compromises with the system at one level or another.³⁰⁵

While the opposition struggled to find its voice, the Front took full advantage of the assets it possessed. There is no reason to doubt that the government was genuinely popular as it managed the transition away from the policies of the old regime. Measures such as a legal guarantee of work for all who wanted it, for example, are likely to have been more appealing to the electorate than the more robust opposition commitments to market-based economic transformation.³⁰⁶

The structure of society and the networks operating within it also no doubt offer an explanation for the extent of the Front's victory. Cities like Bucharest, Timisoara and Brasov experienced violent conflict which gave rise to competing narratives around the change of regime. They also possessed the media penetration and the scope for extensive human interaction which heightened and spread the notion of a conflicted transition. While it is important not to caricature village life in Romania at the time as wholly isolated and inward-looking, it is necessary to acknowledge the very different revolution experienced outside of the major cities. There, the new leadership attained a level of unchallenged popular legitimacy that was lacking in the bigger cities. Nelson identifies four reasons for this: the personal appeal of leaders (who appear to have been drawn from a wide base including numerous military personnel); economic factors (the fear of radical change); the weak organisational structures of the opposition (the initial, spontaneous transfer of power had been done under auspices of the Front who thereafter maintained a political dominance); and, to some extent, manipulation.³⁰⁷ Given the real power that local structures possessed over vital issues like access to farm machinery etc, it is not surprising that voters were willing to transfer allegiance to the Front at a national level if they had few reasons to question the legitimacy of their local representatives and, indeed, perhaps depended upon them for access to vital economic resources.

³⁰⁵ Gallagher, *Disputed Election*, pp. 79-93.

³⁰⁶ See Siani-Davies, *Revolution*, pp. 216-217 for details of the government's social policies.

³⁰⁷ Nelson, pp. 75 – 77.

For the opposition, the outcome and conduct of the election reinforced its perception of a stolen revolution evolving into a dysfunctional democracy. For them, the Front's ability to exploit its advantages went well beyond the 'soft' power structures just mentioned. Ballot rigging, intimidation and media bias in favour of the government emerged as favoured explanations for the scale of the defeat.³⁰⁸

Gallagher cites Silviu Brucan as conceding that the Front engaged in 'calumny, intimidation and vote buying,' but he also concedes that it is not clear to what extent this was unco-ordinated local activism or directed from the centre.³⁰⁹ Dennis Deletant's experiences as an observer of the election are also at least ambiguous in respect of electoral fraud allegations. In particular he offers a plausible explanation of the large number of voters who cast their votes from 'special electoral lists.' These lists were made up of voters who came to the polling stations to cast their votes but who did not appear on the official electoral roll. The opposition drew the conclusion that these votes were illegitimately cast but Deletant points out the explanation of local electoral officials is at least as likely – that the official rolls had been drawn up some years earlier during the Communist era, that there had been no time to update them and that the records were hopelessly out of date (not to mention the incentives that might have existed under the old regime for citizens to avoid registration).³¹⁰ Once again, though, with the narrative of a stolen revolution already firmly set in the minds of opposition politicians, it was their *perception* of fraud which shaped their future behaviour.

3.8 University Square, the miners and the birth of opposition co-operation

The electoral and organisational weakness of the historic parties exposed by the 1990 elections was reinforced by their strategic choices in January and February of that year. The results of the elections reinforced their sense of weakness which in turn influenced their future strategy, drawing the opposition towards co-operation and shifting the focus of opposition activities to more informal settings. Student protests in Bucharest's University Square in particular came to symbolise resistance to the Front regime. On 22nd April 1990,

³⁰⁸ The significance of the 'stolen election' as a theme for the opposition is discussed more fully below.

³⁰⁹ Gallagher, *Disputed Election*, page 88.

³¹⁰ Dennis Deletant, *The Romanian elections of May 1990*, Representation, volume 29, 1990, pp. 23 – 26.

a collection of protest groups came together to organise a demonstration in University Square. The core of their manifesto was point 8 of the Timisoara Declaration (see chapter 4) which demanded that Communist era functionaries should be barred from involvement in politics.³¹¹ The Square was declared a ‘Communist-free Zone’ and at the end of April some of the protesters started a hunger strike.

The regime was clearly unsettled by the protests (which mirrored similar events in Bulgaria) but were uncertain how to act. Petre Roman claims that he resisted pressure to clear the protestors from University Square before the elections of 20th May. For the Prime Minister the results of the elections removed any legitimacy from the protestors who were merely ‘sordid’ and ‘promiscuous’. Efforts to clear the Square began shortly after the election results were known.³¹² In a television broadcast on 13th June, Ion Iliescu issued a plea for the population to resist threats to the revolution from ‘hooligan’ elements.³¹³ Over the following two days a reported 10,000 miners from the Jiu Valley arrived in Bucharest and proceeded to break up the demonstration. They also ransacked offices of the opposition parties and of newspapers seen as critical of the regime.³¹⁴

This second ‘Mineriada’ effectively broke the back of the extra-parliamentary opposition movement although lower level protests continued throughout the year. During the autumn of 1990, moves developed to bring together the diverse groups of anti-Communist protesters into a more organised structure. On 6th November this gave rise to the formation of the Civic Alliance, under the slogan, “we can only succeed together”.³¹⁵ The scale of initial enthusiasm for the Alliance appears to have overwhelmed its nascent organisation and as a result it failed to capitalise on the momentum provided by huge demonstrations held on 15th November to mark the anniversary of the 1987 strike in Brasov. By January 1991, Alliance leaders were having to deal with questions about declining numbers at

³¹¹ Stan Stoica, *Dupa* '89, page 31. The organisations organising the protest were the League of Students, the People's Alliance, the 16-21 December Association, the Independent Group for Democracy and the Romanian Anti-totalitarian Front.

³¹² Petre Roman, *Libertatea*, pp. 144 - 145

³¹³ Tom Gallagher, *Theft*, page 95

³¹⁴ Stan Stoica, *Dupa* '89, page 32

³¹⁵ Stan Stoica, *Dupa* '89, page 36. In December, the Civic Alliance then forged a co-operation project with the opposition parties in the form of the National Convention for the Installation of Democracy – see chapter 3 below for details.

meetings and frustrated members who felt they were not being involved in Alliance activities.³¹⁶

Politics remained sharply divided in 1991, not simply over the Front's policies but over its legitimacy to govern. Radicalised, street-based opposition gained new momentum at the end of 1990 with demonstrations to mark the first anniversary of the revolution. A general strike was called in Timisoara and backed by the Civic Alliance.³¹⁷ Two issues dominated the opposition's discourse through the year – the future shape of Romania's constitution, and the collapse of the Soviet Union. However, it was a third – the state of the economy and progress towards liberalisation – that ultimately led to the downfall of the Roman government in the autumn.

Through 1991, the constitutional form of the new Romania became increasingly significant in political debate. The bodies elected in May 1990 had the role, effectively, of a constituent assembly, drafting a new constitution and a referendum was promised before the end of the year. At the heart of divisions over the constitutional design was the position of the monarchy.

King Michael had attempted to return to Romania in December 1990 but was deported with his family on Christmas Day. The government linked the Timisoara protesters and the pro-monarchists together as reactionary forces attempting to overthrow the popular revolution of December 1989 – sparking a predictably furious reaction from the opposition.³¹⁸ In January 1991, National Liberals in the Chamber of Deputies proposed that the king be extended an official invitation to visit the country. The Front responded by deferring the suggestion for further discussion.³¹⁹ In July, a new National Liberal policy prospectus was launched which underlined that most liberals favoured the restoration of the monarchy but that a decision between a constitutional monarchy and a parliamentary republic should be taken by the people in a referendum.³²⁰

³¹⁶ Interviu cu domnii Gabriel Andreescu si Iulian Cornateanu, *Romania Libera*, 17 January 1991, page 5.

³¹⁷ Timisoara nu e singura, *Romania Libera*, 10 January 1991, page 2.

³¹⁸ Dl. Silviu Brucan fata cu reactiunea, *Romania Libera*, 4 January 1990, page 2.

³¹⁹ In Adunarea Deputatilor s-a propus invitarea in tara a Regelui Mihai, *Romania Libera*, 9 January 1990, page 2.

³²⁰ Forumul ideilor liberale, *Romania Libera*, 30 July 1991, page 2.

Romania Libera ran stories about the possible restoration of the monarchy throughout the year.³²¹ Yet, opposition efforts failed to raise the levels of popular support for the monarchy failed to make an impact. In January 1991, an IRSOP poll showed 13% of voters preferring a monarchy with support for a republic at 80%. In August, the figures were 11% and 78%.³²²

The collapse of the Soviet Union also added considerably to the tense and polarised nature of political debate in 1991. Events in Lithuania and Latvia at the beginning of the year heightened the debate within Romania about the future of Moldova.³²³ The Civic Alliance stood in solidarity with those pressing for independence in Moldova. For the 'civic activists' they saw common cause with citizens 'fighting for the ideals of democracy and independence.' National solidarity with other ethnic Romanians was a secondary issue.³²⁴ In August, the Moscow Coup intensified the debates, raised concerns about external threats to Romania's independence and started a shift in thinking on the left about Romania's position relative to Western Europe.

Economic problems were beginning to mount for the government and the new privatisation law became the focus of bitter domestic debate in the summer of 1991. By the middle of the year, divisions within the National Salvation Front were becoming clear. The formation's national convention in March saw a fierce battle between reformers grouped around the Prime Minister and the conservative left wing around President Iliescu – it was clear that the organisation was facing the possibility of a permanent split.³²⁵

On 26th September, the Roman government resigned following the return to the streets of the capital of protesting miners from the Jiu Valley.³²⁶ The congress of the National Peasant Party was taking place at the same time and it is clear that there was some confusion over how to react to the removal of the Roman government being achieved by their own erstwhile enemies. There was also a good deal of fear for the future of Romanian

³²¹ See Monarhia sau Republica, *Romania Libera*, 11 May 1991, page 1, as just one example.

³²² Nelson, page 132.

³²³ See Basarabia = Romania, special report in *Romania Libera*, 1 February 1991.

³²⁴ Celei de-a doua mari Adunari Nationale a Republicii Moldova, *Romania Libera*, 19 February 1991.

³²⁵ Intre Scylla si Carybda, *Romania Libera*, 19 March 1991, page 1.

³²⁶ Demisia Guvernului, *Romania Libera*, 27 September 1991, page 1.

democracy.³²⁷ National Peasant Party president Corneliu Coposu called for the setting up of an interim government led by independents – he ruled out the National Peasant Party co-operating in a government if the ‘remnants of crypto-Communism’ remained in power.³²⁸ But, in another move that reinforced pre-conceptions on both sides of the opposition, the National Liberals decided to join the interim government that was set up by economist Theodor Stolojan. The government was still dominated by figures from the National Salvation Front although non-party figures and those representing other parties too did join while the National Peasants refused to co-operate.³²⁹

Despite this division, the approach of the next set of parliamentary and presidential elections prompted further moves toward co-operation among the parties opposed to the Front. The success of the launch of the Civic Alliance had created the conditions and motivation for closer co-operation among the democratic opposition: their supporters viewed their political capital as being the potential to act as honest brokers.³³⁰ Among the historic parties, the National Liberals were more sceptical of any co-operation project – party vice president Valeriu Stoica claimed in July that it would be a difficult objective to achieve.³³¹ But the historic Social Democrats and the National Peasants, who had been left in an even weaker position than the liberals by the elections of May 1990, embraced the idea. A National Peasant rally in Bucharest in May 1991 – where speakers included representatives of the National Liberals and the historic Social Democrats - heard calls for co-operation in the 1992 elections.³³²

The Democratic Convention finally came into being at the beginning of November 1991. On 14th November, the National Peasants held a press conference at which they called for co-operation between opposition parties and anti-Communist civil society groups aimed at recapturing the ‘solidarity of December 1989 – January 1990’. A joint programme should

³²⁷ Atitudinea noastra trebuie sa fi lupta!, *Romania Libera*, 1st October 1991, page 3.

³²⁸ Interviu cu dl. Corneliu Coposu, *Romania Libera*, 1st October 1991, page 3.

³²⁹ Pavel and Huiu, page 88.

³³⁰ Alianta Civica pentru unificarea opozitiei, *Romania Libera*, 17 April 1991, page 1.

³³¹ Forumul ideilor liberale, *Romania Libera*, 30 July 1991, page 2.

³³² Aceasta guvernare este guvernarea neimplinirilor, *Romania Libera*, 18 May 1991, page 1.

be based on the installation of democratic institutions, guaranteeing the right to private property, opening up a market economy and stopping the process of national decline.³³³

The ambitions for the new Democratic Convention, though, were clearly limited in scope. At a round table discussion of opposition leaders, Radu Campeanu made this clear:

It is a club. An association of people who share a major objective and who understand that from time to time we will discuss issues of importance to the country in order to fix an identity for us all. We are not talking about a fusion of the parties. Each will keep its identity and point of view. But when important questions turn up then we can consult together and reach an understanding. The Democratic Convention does not have a structure. It is the name of a coalition between these parties so the principle pylon remains the National Convention for the Installation of Democracy.³³⁴

Campeanu made it clear that the local organisations of the parties were free to continue their activities and that the scope of the Convention's ambitions was to find common candidates for the local elections – no mention was made of the national poll. Diaconescu suggested that a small executive bureau would be necessary but Social Democrat leader Sergiu Cunesco disagreed – proposing instead two standing commissions, one to deal with local disputes and to organise election material and the other to compile the joint lists.

Whatever the limits on the scope of co-operation and the strength of differences over co-operation with the Front, a significant moment in the development of the Romanian centre-right had arrived. The division in the National Salvation Front between Petre Roman and Ion Iliescu (which was to result in the formation formally splitting in the spring of 1992) and the increasingly tough economic conditions, created an environment where the opposition could realistically begin to think about winning the 1992 elections.

³³³ Conferinta PNTCD pentru opozitia unita, *Romania Libera*, 14 November 1991, page 1.

³³⁴ Opozitia in fata alegerilor, *Romania Libera*, 5 December 1991, pp. 4-5.

3.9 Romanian exceptionalism: the role of legacies

The description above shows that elements of Romania's pre-democratic history were important in shaping the post-Communist political landscape.

The battles fought to secure the creation of a Romanian state meant that the preservation of a unified national state was a significant motif. It contributed to the creation of an ethnic divide within politics which affected the broad landscape of politics but the contention here is that the impact was less significant than is often imagined, both by western and Romanian commentators, particularly so in relation to the centre-right. The centre-right may have been weakened electorally by its inability to monopolise nationalist themes. It may also have suffered organisationally because the ethnic Hungarian community reacted to the perceived threat to its integrity by coalescing in a distinct political formation which then had no incentive to integrate fully into centre-right structures (this is explored in more detail in chapter 5 below). But the centre-right remained consistent in broadly rejecting radical nationalism because of its pro-Western stance. A pro/anti-EU divide did not appear in Romanian politics (although the left briefly maintained a Soviet-oriented foreign policy). And, while the radical right attracted much attention outside of Romania the period of extra-parliamentary conflict on ethnic issues was brief and limited in scope. The high profile success of Vadim Tudor and the Greater Romania Party in 2000 was both short-lived and more due to economic failure and anti-system rhetoric than to explicitly ethnic appeals.

Another common theme in analysis of Romania's transition from Communism has been to suggest that the severity of the Ceausescu regime contributed to an incomplete process of democratisation. It is beyond the scope of this study to explore those issues in full. In terms of the development of the centre right, it is apparent that the absence of any organised domestic opposition elites during the Communist era contributed to the reappearance of the historic parties and the conflict that then ensued between those elites and the new generation of activists who were politicised in the transition. This is explored in more detail in chapter 4 below.

The main contention of this chapter, though, is that it was the intensity of the battle that took place in December 1989/January 1990, and the unsatisfactory nature of the outcome (from the point of view of the opposition elites) that had the biggest and most enduring impact on their subsequent strategic choices. The following section attempts to explain why.

3.10 The radicalisation of politics - why it mattered

Why did the events of January – March 1990 assume such significance for the post-Communist politics of Romania? What led the opposition to respond in the way it did and how did those choices determine the performance of the centre-right thereafter?

Gallagher refers to the Front's decision to contest the elections as creating an 'irreparable breach' between those who had earlier stood together to bring down the Ceausescu regime, one that ran deep into Romanian society.³³⁵ By the end of January, events had led to a hardening of attitudes which shaped the outlook of the opposition – and the National Peasants in particular – for a decade or more. Diaconescu concedes that both sides could be viewed as continuing an old struggle – with the opposition seeing Communism re-born in the events of 28th and 29th of January while the leaders of the Front viewed the National Peasants as right-wing extremists.³³⁶

Tismaneanu quotes Iliescu and Brucan making public statements opposed to political pluralism in the weeks after the revolution and their pursuit of the 'Gorbachevian model' of a supra-ideological body with no need for other parties to exist.³³⁷ The same commentator identifies a hardening of the Front's initially pragmatic attitude towards the opposition after the resignation of Dumitru Mazilu.³³⁸ But there is a clear sense that the Front was feeling

³³⁵ Gallagher, *The Disputed Election*, page 82

³³⁶ Diaconescu, *Revolutie*, page 25

³³⁷ Vladimir Tismaneanu in Lyman Legters (ed), *Eastern Europe – Transformation and Revolution 1945 – 1991*, D C Heath, Lexington, 1992, page 471

³³⁸ Tismaneanu in Karen Dawisha & Bruce Parrott (eds), *Politics, Power and the Struggle for Democracy in South East Europe*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1997, page 420. Mazilu, along with Brucan, Roman and Iliescu had initially formed the most prominent core of the FSN leadership. The western media identified him as a moderate influence and it was his interaction with the crowd during the protests of 13th January which led to the granting of eye-catching concessions by the government such as a referendum on the restoration of the death penalty and the banning of the Communist Party. As the Front recovered its balance and sought to unwind these various promises, Mazilu became the focus of an intense campaign of personal attacks in the media, eventually being forced to resign at the end of the month.

its way into the new political landscape. That Iliescu and others at the top of the organisation may well have initially harboured thoughts of Gorbachev-style limited reforms is hardly surprising given their background. What is perhaps more surprising is that they proved sufficiently adaptable to marshal the diverse political assets they found at their disposal to craft an enduring and highly successful narrative in the context of open political competition.

The Front rapidly distanced itself from Communism in its choice of language: as early as 22nd December, its communiqués were referring to the ‘power structures of the Ceausescu clan’.³³⁹ But association of the ills of the former regime with the person of Ceausescu did not lead directly to an attempt to rehabilitate socialism. Instead the language of national unity was employed, reflecting the breadth of interests assembled in the Front in its early days and, it would seem, the ability of the Front’s leaders to read and adapt to the new political environment. Taken together with other adjustments to popular pressure that were made by the Front it perhaps also indicates the leadership’s awareness of their own vulnerability – and points to the opportunities that might have existed had the opposition been able to find space *within* the new power structures at an early stage.

Pavel and Huiu, writing as academic observers but also as informed insiders, identify the conflict with the Front as forging the Democratic Convention from the first days of January 1990. Although the formation was officially launched in November 1991, they see the Convention from the beginning as an opposition movement, born from the resistance of one part of civil society to the monopoly and abuse of power. The twin axes of the Democratic Convention’s initial activity were anti-Communism and ‘anti-Frontism’.³⁴⁰

From the very beginning, National Peasant politicians were suspicious of the new government. Coposu had been refused entry to the Central Committee building on 22nd December and he clearly drew a direct link between this early exclusion and the violence which was inflicted on party offices at the end of January.³⁴¹ Whatever the truth behind the attacks on the National Peasant Party and its leaders, there is no doubting the depth of fear

³³⁹ Stefanescu, page 45

³⁴⁰ Pavel & Huiu, pp13-14. Iulia Huiu was a National Liberal candidate in the 2007 elections to the European Parliament and Dan Pavel has advised a number of right wing party leaders.

³⁴¹ Corneliu Coposu, *Confesiuni*, Editura Anastasia, Bucharest, 1996, page 21.

and bitterness they generated. These feelings shaped the attitudes of National Peasant politicians beyond even their electoral victory in 1996.

Academic analysis and journalistic commentary confirmed the opposition's interpretation of the political landscape and the reasons why it had developed the way it did. Even as the notion of an electoral alliance between the opposition parties was beginning to evolve, the nature of the Communist regime – with its repression, destruction of civil society and promotion of racism - were being discussed as reasons for the opposition's weakness.³⁴² The clash between the older generation of dissidents and the leaders of Romania's televised revolution thus became a source of division and weakness in the opposition ranks. It led to a loss of potential recruits, resources and legitimization as the historic parties were pushed into the role of critical outsiders. And that perception of the parties own weakness in turn influenced future decisions about strategy and organisation.

The bitterness of the division between the opposition and the Front exposed the divisions *within* the opposition also. National Liberal leader Radu Campeanu in particular became the focus of criticism for his choice of co-operation with the regime. In January 1991, the National Liberals' Executive Secretary – Eugen Mailat – resigned because of Campeanu's ambiguous stance on the status of the monarch, a stance which Mailat claimed was an indication of Campeanu's decision to compromise with the Front.³⁴³

With the fall of the Roman government, the National Liberals decided to participate in the new interim government led by Theodor Stolojan – a decision that created enduring damage to relations between the party and the National Peasant Party. In keeping with the National Liberals' traditionally more pragmatic approach they advanced three reasons for joining the government, all rooted in the notion that their decision was taken in the national interest: that firm measures were needed to reduce the suffering of the population and to correct the errors of the previous Front government; that greater transparency was needed

³⁴² *De ce un nou partid?* Romania Libera, 26/6/91, page 1.

³⁴³ Cred ca lupta abia incepe, *Romania Libera*, 24 January 1991, page 2.

in the way government was conducted; and it was necessary to ensure that equitable conditions were created for the next round of national elections.³⁴⁴

The formation of the Civic Alliance created a breach with elements of the National Liberal leadership which persisted through the Democratic Convention era. One commentator talks of ‘panic’ in the ranks of the Liberal leadership on the formation of the Alliance and of Campeanu’s ‘irritation’. Liberalism had seemed to be the ideology of the moment following the collapse of Communism and was particularly appealing to young people. The National Liberals had suffered a heavy defeat at the May 1990 elections but the result was good enough for Campeanu to see himself as leader of the opposition. This ideological and electoral leadership of the opposition was clearly threatened by a new civic movement that could bring 200,000 demonstrators on to the streets of Bucharest as it had on 15th November 1990.³⁴⁵

The results of the 1990 elections deepened the sense of division between the opposition and the Front. The opposition parties sought to rationalise the scale of their defeat by adding to their narrative of a stolen revolution – for them the elections were a corrupt process managed by an illegitimate government. But public opinion in relation to the elections illustrates one of the core reasons for their early weakness. Only 8% of those polled after the elections felt that they had been conducted in an incorrect way.³⁴⁶ While the opposition continued to focus on the Front’s lack of legitimacy and to focus on their passionate opposition to Communism, the electorate had largely accepted the Front as the leaders of the revolution and as the legitimate leaders of the country. Only with defeat in the 1992 elections and the gradual generational changes in the leadership did the opposition leaders begin to shift their emphasis on to wider, more electorally resonant concerns. Yet, even then, the extent to which strident anti-Communism constituted the formation’s genetic make-up meant that it faced huge internal pressures once it finally won power, as shown in chapters 3 and 4.

³⁴⁴ PNL: participarea noastra la un nou guvern nu constituie o aprobare a asa-zisiei reforme Roman, *Romania Libera*, 18 October 1991, page 2.

³⁴⁵ Miscarea liberala din Romania la momentul adeverului, *Romania Libera*, 26 January 1991, page 2.

³⁴⁶ Peter Siani Davies, *Traditional Parties*.

So assumptions that underpinned opposition behaviour were set early. Its political narrative was radicalised in a way that risked alienating large parts of the electorate (particularly in relation to the former regime since so many citizens had passively co-operated with its existence). The theme of the stolen revolution carried through into repeated questioning of the legitimacy of the Front and its successors to govern (including challenging Iliescu's constitutional right to stand for election in 1996 and 2000 on the grounds that he was limited to two terms in office) which meant that the opposition persisted in focusing on issues that were not of central concern to the electorate. The electoral and organisational weakness of the historic parties drove them towards co-operation. Yet an atmosphere of distrust was generated between the National Liberals and the National Peasants that persisted through to the end of the Convention (see chapter 5 below). Meanwhile the Civic Alliance became the home of a new generation of ideologically motivated activists and the organisation grew to be both the glue which held the centre-right together in opposition and the force which pushed the Convention apart in government.

Chapter four: Elites, legacies and organisational cohesion

This chapter explores the role of personal relationships among the Convention's leadership group as an explanatory factor in its development and ultimate failure. This follows the work of Hanley et al. who determined that 'elite cohesion' was a significant variable in deciding the success of centre-right parties in Central and Eastern Europe.³⁴⁷ But it also links directly to the legacy explanations explored in chapter three above.

Sean Hanley built on this theme in his study of the post-Communist Czech right. He identified elite cohesion as one important element in the success of the Czech Civic Democrats thanks to the shared experiences – in particular the 'normalisation' period after the Prague Spring of 1968 – of a number of its leaders which had a significant influence on their early political development and on their post-Communist outlook.³⁴⁸

This chapter shows that there were significant divisions among the centre-right elite in Romania and locates the reason for those divisions in the nature of the opposition to the Communist regime and its eventual overthrow.

The story of the Democratic Convention does seem to be a story of cross-cutting divisions, the most important one of which was a generational divide between one group of leaders who shared experience of political activism that pre-dates the Communist takeover in Romania and another who were brought into politics by the Communist regime's downfall. Thus, this chapter concentrates on those two identifiable groups: the older group of Communist-era dissidents who became known as the Seniors; and the civic activists who entered the political arena via the revolution of December 1989.

This chapter does not claim that they represent the whole of the political elite on the post-Communist centre right. Ethnic nationalists – both Romanian and Hungarian – are not included in this analysis, for example. The political representatives of the Hungarian minority were highly cohesive in the sense that the vast majority of them pooled their

³⁴⁷ Sean Hanley, Aleks Szczerbiak, Tim Haughton, Brigid Fowler, *Sticking together: explaining comparative centre-right party success in post-Communist Central and Eastern Europe*, Party Politics, vol. 14, number 4, 2008, pp. 407 – 434.

³⁴⁸ Sean Hanley, *New Right*, chapter 3.

resources in the Hungarian Democratic Union rather than risk diluting their strength by dividing along ideological lines. Their numbers and limited electoral potential meant that their influence on the Convention's strategic development was less direct and is dealt with more fully elsewhere. The Romanian nationalists exerted a pull factor on the ideological and electoral direction of the Convention but they were never themselves part of the centre-right or the Convention leadership group. Similarly, the Democrat Party had a significant influence in shaping the competitive arena in which the Convention operated. Its leadership demonstrated a high degree of cohesion and partisan loyalty and it is possible to trace a shared and influential background for many of them as mid-tier bureaucrats within the former Communist regime. However, while this might suggest that the Democrat Party offers an interesting case study by which to test the significance of elite cohesion, it was never part of the Convention and its influence on the formation was as an exogenous actor not as a part of the Convention's leadership.

Other sub-groups and individuals who cannot be easily classified were present within the Convention but it was the competing strategic visions offered by the two groups identified – the Seniors and the civic activists - that most influenced the political direction of the Convention between 1991 and 2000.

4.1 The Seniors

The group commonly referred to as the Seniors consisted of the ageing cohort of National Peasant and, to a lesser extent, National Liberal politicians who had opposed Communist rule in its early years and who had returned to active politics on the fall of Ceausescu. Some of this group had been imprisoned in Romania and others had carried on their opposition activities in exile.

Chapter three above explored the factors that resulted in an absence of active domestic opposition to the Romanian Communist regime. This history meant that there were no proto-parties around which opponents of the regime could coalesce when its power suddenly collapsed as there had been in Poland and Hungary. It also meant there were no credible dissident elites to rally opposition forces as there had been in Czechoslovakia. There had been no popular uprising (such as 1968 in Czechoslovakia or 1980 in Poland) to

forge a either an intellectual narrative or a leadership group for the opposition. There were no protest movements, no free trades unions (or campaign groups such as Bulgaria's Eco-glasnost³⁴⁹) and no underground universities such as existed in Poland. As a result the leadership of the opposition fell to the re-formed historic parties who could call upon activists who had a strong institutional loyalty to their party and to new activists who had been politicised by the 1989 revolution. The dominance of the group of Seniors influenced the development of the Convention in three ways: in its choices of political strategy; its public image; and its ability to cope with the pressures of government. The role of the Seniors, though, also led to a regular tensions over political strategy with the younger and ultimately more implacable members of the Convention. These two factors – the strength of the Seniors' loyalty to their old party and the lack of connection with the new generation of opposition leaders – can be anticipated as having a major impact on the Convention.

On the National Peasant Party side, the party leadership was completely dominated by survivors of its pre-Communist era membership. Of the ten members of the National Peasants' political bureau elected at the party's first congress at least eight were activists from the pre-war era (the share might have been higher but it was not possible to find biographical details for the other two members.)³⁵⁰ Party president Corneliu Coposu was born in 1914, had served as personal secretary to pre-war party leader Iuliu Maniu and had been imprisoned by the Communist authorities between 1947 and 1964.³⁵¹ Ion Diaconescu, Coposu's deputy, was born in 1917 and had joined the party in 1936 – he was also imprisoned between 1947 and 1964. Serban Ghica, born in 1919, was captain of the pre-war national rugby team and was imprisoned with Coposu for his anti-Communist activism.³⁵² Gabriel Tepelea was born in 1916 and was a political prisoner from 1949 to 1955. Cicerone Ionitelu, born in 1924, was imprisoned and then exiled to Paris.³⁵³ Ion Ratiu, born in 1917 was a political exile for almost 50 years until January 1990. Fewer

³⁴⁹ For Eco-glasnost see Gerald Creed, *Domesticating Revolution*, Pennsylvania State University Press, 1998, pp. 19 – 21.

³⁵⁰ *Alegerea Biroului de Conducere al PNTCD*, unidentified newspaper report taken from www.corneliu-coposu.ro. Accessed 3 May 2009.

³⁵¹ Except where indicated, the biographical details quoted in this section are taken from Gheorghe Crisan, *Piramida Puterii, vol II*, Pro Historia, Bucharest, 2004.

³⁵² *Serban Ghica condus pe ultimul drum*, www.kappa.ro, 31 July 2006, accessed 13 September 2009.

³⁵³ Details from <http://www.procesulcomunismului.com/>, accessed 9 May 2009.

details are available for Valentin Gabrielescu (born in 1916) or for Ioan Barbus but it would appear that both were active in the National Peasant Party in the pre-Communist era with Barbus leading the party's youth wing in the immediate post-War period.³⁵⁴ Of this leadership group three men – Corneliu Coposu, Ion Diaconescu and Ion Ratiu – were the dominant characters within the party.

Corneliu Coposu held a unique position within the National Peasant Party and then within the Convention. Coposu's influence on the party in the years between 1990 and his death in 1995 is hard to overstate. He led the party through this time and was a member of the Romanian Senate between 1992 and 1995.

During its first years of existence the party benefited tremendously from Coposu's moral standing, organisational skills and moral standing.³⁵⁵

His personal links with Iuliu Maniu carried great weight and his colleagues acknowledge Coposu's skills as a mediator.³⁵⁶ These together meant that he was able to shape the direction the party took considerably. As discussed in chapter five he secured membership of the Christian Democrat International for the National Peasant Party in 1987 and evoked the words of Maniu to develop a Christian Democrat identity for the party. He is widely seen as the driving force behind the creation of the Convention. He used his personal authority to endorse Emil Constantinescu as presidential candidate in 1992 (and his continued sponsorship of Constantinescu thereafter) which had a direct impact on the political strategy pursued by the Convention beyond his (Coposu's) death in 1995:

The Democratic Convention was an alliance of forces against Communism, against Iliescu. It was left, centre *and* right, a coalition put together by Corneliu Coposu.³⁵⁷

³⁵⁴ The ninth member of the political bureau was Ilie Paunescu. The tenth has not been identified.

³⁵⁵ Lavinia Stan, *From Riches to Rags: the Romanian Christian Democrat Peasant Party*, East European Quarterly, vol. 39 number 2 (Summer 2005), page 181.

³⁵⁶ There is a danger in relying on post-mortem commentary but the interview that the Coposu Foundation recorded with former government minister Mircea Ciumara – who attests to Coposu's calmness and willingness to listen in particular – is typical in giving a flavour of the respect that Coposu commanded: http://www.corneliu-coposu.ro/articol/index.php/932_interviu_cu_mircea_ciumara/ (accessed 4 May 2009)

³⁵⁷ Interview with Virgil Petrescu, Bucharest, May 2008.

Coposu's successor as party president was his friend and long-term collaborator, Ion Diaconescu. Diaconescu, inevitably, is personally associated with the National Peasants' calamitous performance in the general election of 2000 which effectively brought to an end the party's time as a significant political actor. Presidential adviser Simona Vrabiescu criticises Diaconescu for lacking the political skills and personality of Coposu and for being conflicted by simultaneously holding the roles of president of the National Peasants, the Democratic Convention and the Chamber of Deputies.³⁵⁸ This analysis is echoed from within the National Peasants at local level too:

Ion Diaconescu made lots of mistakes. He was outdated. He didn't understand the economic changes that were taking place. He held too many positions and couldn't cope and he neglected the party.³⁵⁹

Diaconescu himself suggests that the animosity created by the 1992 candidate selection and by Ratiu's challenge to Constantinescu's candidacy after Coposu's death led to Constantinescu vetoing Ratiu as a nominee for the post of President of the Chamber of Deputies.³⁶⁰ Given that Diaconescu himself ended up in the post it is reasonable to treat this claim warily but the end result was the perceived weakening of the Convention's organisational leadership since Diaconescu had to combine the presidencies of the Convention, the National Peasant Party and the Chamber of Deputies. Of course party leaders frequently combine multiple roles but in this case it meant there was no drive from the leadership to further the interests of the Convention – Diaconescu's first loyalty was to the National Peasant Party. And given his age, he had no further personal political ambitions to pursue.

Ion Ratiu was a more divisive figure. His resistance story is perhaps rather less heroic having opted for exile while serving as a diplomat in London in 1940 and going on to have a very successful business career.³⁶¹ His personal style was anachronistic (he was rarely seen without a bow tie) and his long exile and personal wealth alienating to Romanians

³⁵⁸ Vrabiescu Klechner, page 93.

³⁵⁹ Interview with Petru Butiurca, member of PNT-CD executive bureau, Mures County, 1996-2000.

³⁶⁰ Pavel and Huiu, page 318.

³⁶¹ Biography available at the website of the Ion Ratiu Centre (accessed 12 November 2009): http://www.ratiudemocracycenter.org/en/biografie_en.php.

who had suffered the privations of the Communist regime (synthesising both of these aspects of his personality he offered expensive perfumes to women who voted in the 1990 elections).³⁶² His wealth and willingness to stand made him an attractive choice for National Peasant Party candidate in the 1990 presidential elections but thereafter he was a constant source of tension within the leadership, repeatedly seeking a position at the head of the formation while meeting resistance from colleagues who judged that he would damage the party's electoral prospects.

Although no individual matched Corneliu Coposu's influence within the National Peasant Party the other Seniors held immense political capital thanks to their long histories of association with the party and their records of either exile from the homeland or imprisonment within it because of their political beliefs. Yet for many outside observers what marked them out was their capacity for bitter feuding, personal in-fighting and cronyism:

Ionescu-Galbeni and Tepelea established themselves as the party's two-headed *eminence grise*, known for their endless manipulations designed to promote their personal protégés' and block the careers of their opponents.³⁶³

Tepelea had joined the National Peasant Party in the 1930s when both he and Coposu were law students at university in Cluj.³⁶⁴ He served as a member of parliament between 1990 and 2000 and was a vice-president of the party throughout this time. Ionescu-Galbeni was born in 1926, joined the National Peasants in 1945 and was imprisoned between 1947 and 1955. Suspicions about Ionescu-Galbeni's possible collaboration with the Communist-era security services fuelled antipathy towards him.³⁶⁵

The personal feuding was not limited to the National Peasant Party leadership. It played a crucial and damaging role in shaping relations between the National Peasants and the

³⁶² Lavinia Stan, *Riches to Rags*, page 185.

³⁶³ Lavinia Stan, *Riches to Rags*, page 182.

³⁶⁴ Interview with Gabriel Tepelea recorded by the Coposu Foundation to mark the 95th anniversary of Coposu's birth: http://www.corneliu-coposu.ro/articol/index.php/939_interviu_cu_gabriel_tepelea/ (accessed 4 May 2009).

³⁶⁵ Lavinia Stan, *Riches to Rags*, page 182.

National Liberals too with Radu Campeanu, leader of the National Liberals, taking much of the blame for reinforcing divisions within the opposition.

Campeanu, born in 1922, had led the youth wing of the National Liberal Party before the Second World War and was imprisoned then exiled by the Communist regime.³⁶⁶ The divisive character of Campeanu has been clear from the beginning of the story.³⁶⁷ He achieved a degree of political capital as a result of gaining second place in the 1990 poll and opted for a determinedly independent line for his party – Ratiu, for example, reports Campeanu's opinion that National Liberal candidates lost votes in the 1992 local government elections because of their association with the Convention.³⁶⁸ It was assumed that his decisions to withdraw the party from the Convention and to join the Stolojan government were calculated on the basis that he would assume the premiership once Ion Iliescu was re-elected as president.³⁶⁹ Such assumptions made by National Peasant politicians had deep roots based on a reading of the National Liberals' history as being one of compromise and deal-making to retain a role in government.³⁷⁰ As has been referred to in chapter two, it should be said that these attitudes – the willingness to compromise with larger forces in order to gain power - formed part of the National Liberals' own self identity too.³⁷¹

The Seniors reinforced their control over the Democratic Convention's political strategy via their close links with a number of interest groups that joined the Convention, in particular the Association of Former Political Detainees and the World Union of Free Romanians. Leading Seniors within the National Peasant Party had close ties with the Association of Former Political Detainees - although Coposu turned down the presidency of the organisation to avoid it being seen as an adjunct of the party, the post was taken by Constantin Latea who was himself a local leader of the National Peasant Party in Bucharest.³⁷² The Association was committed to promoting lustration measures to bring

³⁶⁶ Gheorghe Crisan.

³⁶⁷ See chapter 2 above.

³⁶⁸ Ratiu, page 72

³⁶⁹ Diaconescu, *Revolutie*, page 102

³⁷⁰ See for example the article Domnii Campeanu, Lazarescu, Quintus et comp., *Romania Libera*, 6 August 1992, page 4, which drew these historical comparisons directly to explain Campeanu's strategic approach.

³⁷¹ Siani-Davies, *Revolution*, page 243.

³⁷² Ion Diaconescu, *Revolutie*, page 29.

former members of the Communist regime to account.³⁷³ Ion Ratiu was president of the World Union of Free Romanians. His diaries reveal the closeness of his personal relationship with the royal family and the influence of the émigré organisation in promoting a strongly pro-monarchist line.³⁷⁴

The diaspora maintained influential links with the Convention leadership thanks to their personal connections with the Seniors. Constantinescu made a number of trips to the United States to court the émigré community after his selection as the Convention's presidential candidate.³⁷⁵ Simona Vrabiescu Klechner was a New York based activist within the Romanian émigré community who went on to become an adviser to President Constantinescu.³⁷⁶ In her memoirs, she claims for herself a significant role in persuading the Convention leadership to adopt a political programme along the lines of the Republican Party's Contract with America. This led to the adoption of the *Contract with Romania* as the basis of the Convention's electoral programme for the 1996 elections.³⁷⁷

There is no evidence of conflicting priorities during the opposition years between the Seniors and these sponsor organisations – it seems that they worked together towards shared policy objectives. But it should be noted that it has not been possible to build a full picture of those groups' membership and internal debates. What is clear is that the political approach of the Seniors was heavily influenced by their experiences during the Communist era and their memories of a lost Golden Age. As one young political consultant put it, expressing her frustrations with the outmoded preoccupations of the senior Convention politicians:

They were completely out of touch. They couldn't open their mouths without mentioning the nineteenth century and the monarchy.³⁷⁸

³⁷³ Details of the Association can be found at: <http://www.afdpr.ro> (accessed 12 November 2009).

³⁷⁴ Ratiu, various references.

³⁷⁵ See references in both Constantinescu's and Vrabiescu Klechner's diaries.

³⁷⁶ Vrabiescu trained as a lawyer and subsequently worked as a director of specialist legal libraries. From 1991 to 1996 she was co-president of ACORD – the Ad hoc Committee for the Organisation of Romanian Democracy. In 1999 she returned to Romania to act as presidential advisor to Emil Constantinescu.

³⁷⁷ Vrabiescu Klechner, pp 19-29.

³⁷⁸ Interview with Alice Ratyis. Ratyis worked as a campaign adviser for the Convention in the 2000 elections.

Ultimately, though, the split within the Convention was not caused by the Seniors' dogmatic attachment to the demands of their sponsor organisations. Rather it led on from a clash between the pragmatism of the Seniors and the more intransigent ideologists around the Civic Alliance. This may be derived from many of the Seniors having to live a life time of compromise to survive as known dissidents under the Communist regime or from an increased hunger for power derived from a life time in opposition. The conflict over the Dumitrescu lustration laws, examined in chapter five above, is illustrative. Although Ticu Dumitrescu himself was one of the old guard of National Peasant leaders his radical proposals brought him into conflict with other Seniors who led efforts to block and emasculate the legislation because of fears over its impact on the coalition (and, no doubt, in some cases fear of what disclosure laws would reveal about their own relationships with the former regime.) A further, surprising, illustration is the revelation that leading members of the Convention considered entering a coalition with Iliescu's Social Democrats after the 1996 elections.³⁷⁹ While the option, which would have seen National Peasant Party General Secretary Radu Vasile installed as Prime Minister, seems only to have been considered briefly in the wake of the first round of voting in the elections, the fact that it was considered at all suggests that leading Seniors were willing to consider the most difficult compromise in order to bring the party into power.

4.2 The civic activists

While the Seniors were re-activating their long-dormant party structures, the demonstrators who took to the streets in December 1989 merged with members of the ruling apparatus who made their move against the Ceausescu regime as it became clear its end was near to form the National Salvation Front. The Front became the new governing entity but it split almost immediately – once the more radical members realised the extent to which former Communist apparatchiks had gained control of the provisional governing structure. When these more liberal members of the Front began to peel away to the nascent opposition few of them were well known and none had a popular following or had created a political organisation. Known apparatchiks such as Ion Iliescu, Petre Roman and Dumitru Mazilu

³⁷⁹ Interview with Valeriu Stoica quoted in Pavel and Huiu, page 312.

had ‘seized the means of projection’ and their prominence meant that others had not gained the public profile to invest them with the credentials to lead the opposition.³⁸⁰

Generally the civic activists were much younger than the Seniors, less experienced in politics and more radical in their outlook (in the sense of being less pragmatic towards the former regime).³⁸¹ The civic activists dominated the Civic Alliance and the Civic Alliance Party but were also found in the historic parties and other civil society groups such as the Group for Social Dialogue and University Solidarity. Their distinguishing feature was their prioritising of policy objectives (particularly around lustration and related issues) over public office as has been discussed in chapter four.

Ana Blandiana was the de-facto leader of this group. Blandiana was born into a dissident family and she had begun to write poetry that was critical of the Communist regime during the 1980s.³⁸² She led the Civic Alliance between 1991 and 2001 and was clearly an important link between the ‘Seniors’ and the new generation of civic activists – in the words of President Constantinescu’s chief adviser, she was, “extremely respectful to the old gentlemen and devoted to the co-operation project.”³⁸³ She had a strong relationship with Coposu in particular, forged, she claimed, as a result of a shared experience of being the victim of negative attacks by the National Salvation Front.³⁸⁴

The strategic choice of the Civic Alliance leadership was not to accept any elected public office and this generated tensions which led to the creation of the Civic Alliance Party. Although the Civic Alliance Party adopted the Civic Alliance’s political programme as its own (see chapter 4 above), there was no cross-over of personnel between the Governing

³⁸⁰ Siani-Davies, Romanian, *Revolution*, pp. 195 - 199

³⁸¹ For example, leading civic activists Valerian Stan (born 1955), Ana Blandiana (born 1942) and Gabriel Andreescu (born 1952) were all in their thirties or forties at the time of the 1989 revolution. Emil Constantinescu and Nicolae Manolescu (both born in 1939) were older but in general for all the leaders of this group their entire adult lives had been lived under the Communist regime. The impact of the group’s lack of political experience and its political radicalism is explored in more detail through the chapter.

³⁸² Blandiana’s biography on the Civic Alliance web site can be found at: http://www.aliantacivica.ro/organizare/ana_blandiana.htm (accessed 26 September 2009).

³⁸³ Interview with Zoe Petre, February 2009, Bucharest.

³⁸⁴ Interview with Blandiana published by the Coposu Foundation. www.corneliu-coposu.ro/u/p/image/multumiri/transee_memorie-blandiana_01.jpg, accessed 4 May 2009. Blandiana left the Council of the National Salvation Front in January 1990.

Council of the Civic Alliance and the National Council of the Civic Alliance Party, both elected at the Civic Alliance congress in July 1991.³⁸⁵

Two of the three leaders of the Civic Alliance Party fit the profile of dissident liberal intellectuals. Party leader Nicolae Manolescu was the oldest of the three – sixty one when the party was formed but he was a distinguished literary critic and academic with a strong family pedigree of dissidence as his father had been a prominent member of the National Liberals who spent two years as a political prisoner in the 1950s. Party vice president Stelian Tanase was 13 years younger, he had graduated in Philosophy in 1977 and had spent much of the 1980s under observation by the security services because of his dissident activities. The party's other vice president, Alexandru Popovici, did not fit the stereotype so well. Sixty years old, he was a professor but at a provincial institute of engineering, not of liberal arts in the capital.³⁸⁶

The Civic Alliance Party deliberately cast itself as an elite party, not a mass party.³⁸⁷ This together with its failure to attract more of the civic movement's leaders meant that the party lacked the political capital of the Civic Alliance. Manolescu himself was also not well suited to the role of party leader in a democratic setting, being seen as arrogant and divisive.³⁸⁸ In the end Manolescu and the party were marginalised within the Convention and left the formation in 1995 to pursue an alliance with other excluded liberal forces which failed to make an impact in the 1996 elections.

The third significant leader from the civic liberal wing of the opposition was, of course, Emil Constantinescu. Constantinescu was born in 1939 into a comfortably middle-class family. He became a professor of geology at Bucharest University and subsequently the Rector of the university. He joined University Solidarity and then the Civic Alliance after the 1989 revolution, becoming one of the Civic Alliance's vice presidents.³⁸⁹ Two related aspects of his political make-up had a major influence on his approach to his leadership of

³⁸⁵ Congresul Aliantei Civice, *Romania Libera*, 9 July 1991, page 2.

³⁸⁶ Biographical information for all three leaders taken from a special report on the Civic Alliance Party, *Romania Libera*, 15 October 1991, page 9.

³⁸⁷ Interview with party president Nicolae Manolescu, *Romania Libera*, 15 October 1991, page 9.

³⁸⁸ In the words of Zoe Petre, 'the qualities that made him a good literary critic did not make him a good political leader.' Interview with Zoe Petre, February 2009, Bucharest.

³⁸⁹ Details taken from Constantinescu's autobiography.

the Convention: the first was his lack of a party base within the Convention; and the second was his firmly held intellectual conception of the role of state president. Constantinescu showed no interest in, or aptitude for, party-building.

Constantinescu's approach led to his separation from other civic activists who maintained a more hard-line approach to dealing with the Communist past. As described in chapter five, Constantinescu took a constitutionally correct but narrow view of his role as president, prioritising foreign affairs and Romania's place in the world. He did, though, see the presidency as a tool to engineer a form of social revolution in Romania that would lead to a new civic culture and as part of that vision he did set out a radical programme of political and administrative reforms as part of his 1996 election campaign.³⁹⁰

The relationship between two other leading civic activists had a significant impact on the politics of the period and the fate of the Convention in particular: Valerian Stan and Victor Ciorbea. Valerian Stan was vice-president of Civic Alliance and minister responsible for investigating corruption. His route into post-Communist politics was as the spokesman for a group of radical junior army officers at the time of the 1989 revolution. As described in chapter four he disregarded the demands of coalition politics and published a dossier detailing the illegal occupation of nationalised property which named members of the Democratic Party among the offenders.³⁹¹ The failure to pursue anti-corruption measures in office was the trigger for the defining crisis in the Convention's history – the events leading up to the dismissal of Prime Minister Victor Ciorbea which began with the removal of Valerian Stan from his ministerial post (see chapter five below for details). The crisis left Emil Constantinescu isolated from the political forces that made up the Convention (and particularly those who were Constantinescu's most natural allies in the Civic Alliance) and further denied the Convention meaningful leadership which led to it drifting to defeat and break-up in 2000.

Constantinescu distanced himself from the radicals in the Convention, in the process leaving the formation effectively leaderless. Constantinescu's own background may have contributed to his reluctance to pursue the same rigidly dogmatic line as did others among

³⁹⁰ Reforma clasei politice si a administratiei, *Romania Libera*, 18 August 1996, page 3.

³⁹¹ Interview with Valerian Stan.

the civic activists. His supporters defend his approach as one based on constitutional propriety and criticise those who demanded extra-constitutional acts to pursue divisive political strategies.³⁹²

The central importance of the Timisoara Declaration to the identity of the civic activists (and in particular point 8 of the Declaration, which called for former members of the nomenklatura to be barred from public office) has been discussed above. Emil Constantinescu's legitimacy as a candidate was challenged directly in those terms and he addressed the challenge directly too:

It is well known that of the candidates [to be the Convention's presidential candidate] I am the only one who was a member of the [Communist] Party. I was not secretary of the Party or a member of its university committee as has been insinuated. I joined the Party in 1965 at a time when the hope of liberalisation created at the university an illusion of internal change.³⁹³

Pavel and Huiu criticise Constantinescu for abandoning the Convention after his election victory. They contrast his approach – attempting to place himself above partisan politics and represent 'all Romanians' with that of Ion Iliescu who remained involved in running the Social Democrats. Indeed they go further and assert that Constantinescu never gave anything back to the Convention, neither as its president or as an ordinary member.³⁹⁴

Vrabiescu Klechner considers that, although relations between Constantinescu and the Civic Alliance were damaged by Valerian Stan's dismissal, the President opted to join the 'club of the frustrated' with the radicals after the affair.³⁹⁵ Academic analysts Tismaneanu and Kligman echo these views of Constantinescu whom they accuse of isolating himself from his coalition allies and launching generalised attacks on the political class:

³⁹² Interview with Zoe Petre, February 2009, Bucharest.

³⁹³ He justified his continued membership in terms of a compromise necessary for his career – a situation that was doubtless personally familiar to millions of ordinary Romanians. *Cine va fi candidatul Conventiei Democratice? Romania Libera*, 24 June 1992, page 3.

³⁹⁴ Pavel and Huiu, page 325.

³⁹⁵ Vrabiescu Klechner, page 143.

Enamoured of his own image, Constantinescu had become increasingly convinced that Romanians had failed him rather than vice versa.³⁹⁶

This sentiment is echoed in Constantinescu's own words from his autobiography which illustrate his frustration with the political realities of being president but also underline his tendency to feel let down by the demands of an ungrateful electorate:

The first democratic presidents after the change of regimes in the east European countries in the 90's had rather similar experiences. Brought to power by crowds filled with enthusiasm, they had to learn quickly that a president elected by a democratic vote of the people must be a prophet, a manager and a garbage man.³⁹⁷

The division between the civic activists and the party politicians appears to have been present from the earliest stages in the Democratic Convention but the separation between Constantinescu's team and the rest of the civic activists also appears to have deep roots. Pavel and Huiu point out that there was a division in the management of the 1992 election campaign, the consequences of which seem to have been long-lasting. The leading figures in the political parties and the Civic Alliance were engaged in managing the parliamentary campaign. The running of the presidential campaign, though, was left to a group of Constantinescu's personal contacts, particularly colleagues from University Solidarity who had little previous experience of involvement in politics.³⁹⁸ These colleagues went on to found the Romanian Foundation for Democracy as the vehicle for Constantinescu's continued involvement in politics.³⁹⁹

That this division remained is confirmed by Zoe Petre. Her almost comic account of attempts to professionalise the 1996 presidential campaign illustrate both the isolation of the Constantinescu team from the rest of the Convention leadership and the extent to which their 'other-worldly' outlook might have contributed to that isolation:

³⁹⁶ Vladimir Tismaneanu and Gail Kligman, *Romania's first post-Communist decade*, East European Constitutional Review, Vol. 10, no. 1.

³⁹⁷ Constantinescu, page 124.

³⁹⁸ Pavel and Huiu, page 149.

³⁹⁹ Pavel and Huiu, page 150.

Some of the campaign advisors came with the attitude ‘you are an ignorant African tribe and we are here to teach you.’ They did not know how to speak to us so we had to invent our own way. It was OK. We read some books. We were university people so we had some insight into semiotics.⁴⁰⁰

4.3 The inter-generational shift and the imperative of victory

Anti-Communism and the belief that the National Salvation Front represented continuing Communist power united the Seniors with the new generation of dissident activists in the early 1990s. It provided sufficient glue to ultimately bind the opposition into the Democratic Convention. Over time awareness grew of the potential electoral cost to the Convention as a result of being seen to be dominated by the Seniors. The need for a generational shift in the leadership of the National Peasant Party (and by extension of the Convention) at the very least provided a pretext for intra-party contestation.

The selection of the Convention’s presidential candidate for the elections of 1992 represented a significant step in the attempt to broaden the opposition’s leadership. Ion Ratiu’s account reveals the tensions and manoeuvres that consumed the energies of the Convention’s leadership in the first half of 1992.⁴⁰¹ Central to the unfolding drama were Nicolae Manolescu (leader of the Civic Alliance Party), Corneliu Coposu, Radu Campeanu, Emil Constantinescu and Ratiu himself.

Ratiu was anxious to be the Democratic Convention presidential candidate but grew increasingly frustrated with the Convention’s organisational short-comings and the repeated requests for financial support from the National Peasants which Ratiu interpreted as a requirement upon him to buy the candidacy.⁴⁰² He complains about long and disorganised meetings of the Convention’s national leadership committee and their inability to make a decision about the choice of candidate.⁴⁰³ He frequently mused on whether the Convention has a purpose at all.⁴⁰⁴

⁴⁰⁰ Interview with Zoe Petre.

⁴⁰¹ Clearly a personal and thus partial account, Ratiu’s diary is nevertheless a fascinating insight into the conflicts and personality clashes that characterised the process.

⁴⁰² Ratiu, page 124.

⁴⁰³ Ratiu, page 186.

⁴⁰⁴ Ratiu, page 9.

Manolescu began the year as Ratiu's main contender for the candidacy. Early in January he proposed that each party or group in the Convention should have just one representative on the national executive – clearly an attempt to lessen the dominance of the National Peasants.⁴⁰⁵ He began to fade from view, though, during the spring, perhaps as a result of Campeanu's decision to withdraw the National Liberals from the Convention, perhaps as a result of realising that the Convention leadership was determined to find a compromise candidate who would be less divisive within the organisation than himself or Ratiu.

Convention president Corneliu Coposu played the role of king-maker. It can be assumed from his lack of early backing that he has considerable doubts about Ratiu but he was unwilling to close down Ratiu's ambitions for fear of its impact on party unity (and, no doubt, funding).⁴⁰⁶ Diaconescu is cast (by Ratiu at least) as Coposu's shadowy enforcer as Ratiu became increasingly bitter about the lack of support he received from the National Peasant Party leadership.⁴⁰⁷

Constantinescu defeated Ratiu by 46 votes to 18 in the selection meeting on 27th June 1992 after Manolescu and Sergiu Cunescu, leader of the historic Social Democrats, had been eliminated in the first rounds of voting. Ratiu was understandably bitter:

Doina [Cornea] thinks it was a dirty game. It is certain that all the liberals and all the Hungarians voted against me. Also the Civic Alliance and the Civic Alliance Party etc. From the National Peasants one was always against me. The Ecologist Party was loyal. What did the Christian Democratic Union do, Simina Mezincescu and their partners, the 21st December Organisation? At least I am sure I had the two votes of the World Union of Free Romanians. Why did Coposu introduce all these aliens into the Convention after Campeanu left? So he could block me? They all voted against me. So there it is, the coming election will be between two former Communists for president: Iliescu and Emil Constantinescu. What will the others do? What will

⁴⁰⁵ Ratiu, page 8.

⁴⁰⁶ Ratiu, page 13.

⁴⁰⁷ Ratiu expresses surprise that the leading 'Seniors', Gabriel Tepelea and Valentin Gabrielescu backed him as the National Peasant nominee for the candidacy as the party finally accepted that it had to reach a decision. Ratiu, page 19.

[Petre] Roman do? What will the Orthodox Church do? The West will draw its conclusions.⁴⁰⁸

The selection of Constantinescu as presidential candidate marked a watershed for the Convention, changing the formation's public face while at the same time cementing divisions that would later lead to the departure of both Manolescu's Civic Alliance Party and Cunesco's historic Social Democrats. Personal animosities and suspicions about the motivations of individuals continued to influence the formation's development: for example in the case of Dinu Patriciu, leader of the neo-liberal National Liberal Youth Wing, attempts were made to exclude his party from the Convention unless he was removed as leader but the party was admitted after Manolescu gave his support.⁴⁰⁹ The Convention suffered a period of considerable turbulence in early 1995 following the withdrawal of Hungarian Democratic Union (discussed above in chapters three and four), the return of the National Liberals and during difficult negotiations with Petre Roman's Union of Social Democrats over the extent of possible collaboration in the following year's elections.⁴¹⁰ In March, Ratiu and Constantinescu (and a third candidate representing a minor party) contested the presidency of the Convention with Constantinescu winning 13 of the 17 votes in the Convention's National Council.⁴¹¹

The death of Corneliu Coposu towards the end of 1995 marked another turning point in the Convention's development and led to another step away from the dominance of the formation by the Seniors. Coposu's death seems to have brought the contest between generations in the National Peasant Party into the open.⁴¹² It also triggered another brief challenge to Constantinescu's leadership of the Convention from Ion Ratiu with Ratiu appearing to question Constantinescu's suitability as a candidate to oppose Iliescu in the 1996 elections.⁴¹³ But despite the fears of immediate splits in the National Peasants and, as a consequence, the break-up of the Convention both held together until the elections.

⁴⁰⁸ Ratiu, pp. 214 – 215.

⁴⁰⁹ Diaconescu, *Revolutie*, page 101.

⁴¹⁰ Diaconescu, *Revolutie*, page 160 .

⁴¹¹ Pavel and Huiu, page 233.

⁴¹² PNTCD, un congress decisiv, *Romania Libera*, 15 January 1996, page 1.

⁴¹³ Interviu cu presedintele CDR, *Romania Libera*, 18 January 1996, page 3.

The National Peasant Party's second Congress of the post-Communist era, held in January 1996, represented a real threat to internal unity, particularly as the centre-piece of the Congress was an internal election contest to choose a new party president. The National Peasants were aware of the potential for damage to be caused by their gerontocratic image. In the run-up to the 1996 party congress, Remus Opris, a leading figure among the younger generation of Peasantists and an important link between the older generation of leaders and the wider party, issued an analysis of the candidates for the party's Central Bureau and Leadership Committee. The analysis claimed to show the diversity of candidates on offer but with just 12% being under 35 years old, 11 of 156 candidates being women and both of the candidates for the party presidency (Ratiu and Diaconescu) having been born in 1917, the figures hardly stood up to scrutiny.⁴¹⁴ In the end, Diaconescu, the less divisive 'continuity candidate' comfortably defeated Ratiu in the contest for the party presidency, securing 539 of the 703 votes cast.⁴¹⁵ The reactions of other opposition leaders to the outcome of the National Peasant Congress ranged from enthusiasm to cynicism (largely depending on whether they were members of the Convention) but they all shared the view that the National Peasants had opted for unity in order to preserve a credible challenge to Iliescu's Social Democrats.⁴¹⁶

A further effort to dispel the 'Seniors' image of the Convention was made with the June 1996 local elections. A rally for candidates stressed the youth of a 'new generation' of dynamic and competent politicians. Young candidates were paraded before for the delegates and the media – Radu Sarbu, mayoral candidate for Cluj (who was himself in his mid 40s) proudly announced that the formation's lead candidate for the city council was just 35 years old. If nothing else the rally suggested a more united and professional approach to the campaign than had been the case in 1992 with its co-ordinated messages and even a stage-managed display of flag waving from 5,000 delegates to greet the Convention's candidate for mayor of Bucharest.⁴¹⁷

⁴¹⁴ Congresul PNTCD, *Romania Libera*, 15 January 1996, page 3.

⁴¹⁵ Domnul Ion Diaconescu a fost ales presedintele PNTCD, *Romania Libera*, 20 January 1996, page 3.

⁴¹⁶ Reactii ale esichierului politic fata de Congresul PNTCD, *Romania Libera*, 23 January 1996, page 3.

⁴¹⁷ Miting electoral al CDR la Sala Palatului, *Romania Libera*, 20 May 1996, page 3.

The dominance of the National Peasant's Political Bureau by the Seniors has been referred to above. The list of supplementary members of the Bureau did include a number of younger men such as Ulm Spineanu, an engineer born in 1943; Ioan Alexandru, a poet born in 1941, Remus Opris a doctor born in 1958 who joined party after revolution; and Constantin 'Dudu' Ionescu born in 1956 and, like Spineanu, an aviation engineer.⁴¹⁸ And over time these men did begin to take on more significant roles in managing the party.⁴¹⁹ By the time the Convention came to power at the end of 1996, the leadership of its main constituent party had begun to change. Only three of the 22-strong National Peasant Party leadership group were former political prisoners by this stage – albeit that these men (Diaconescu, Ionescu-Galbeni and Ratiu) held the very top positions.⁴²⁰ The party's parliamentary group was also more diverse (a quarter of its Deputies elected in 1992 had been political prisoners) but the parliamentary group were 'weak actors' according to Lavinia Stan which failed to exert substantial influence on the party.⁴²¹

Once in government, the Convention had to deal with the strains of steering the country through a process of substantial change without a majority of its own in parliament and it faced internal pressures as sponsor groups who prioritised radical de-Communisation pressed for action on their policy agenda. Those more radical actors shared a background as having been politically activated by the revolution of December 1989 but they were also separated generationally and in terms of their experience of Communist rule from the older leaders of the historic parties.

The National Peasants suffered internal strains because of the determination of party 'seniors' not to relinquish control to a generation of younger activists and this has been seen as causing a 'crisis of human resources' within the party.⁴²² Ion Diaconescu plays down the significance of this division (unsurprisingly given his position among the leading

⁴¹⁸ Gheorghe Crisan,

⁴¹⁹ Lavinia Stan, *Riches to Rags*.

⁴²⁰ Lavinia Stan, *Riches to Rags*, p. 189.

⁴²¹ Lavinia Stan, *Riches to Rags*, pp. 189 – 190.

⁴²² Abraham, pp. 378 – 381. The consequences of the National Peasant leadership's strategy of restricting opportunities for new members was exposed, according to Abraham, in their choice of Prime Ministerial candidate after the 1996 election, given Victor Ciorbea's lack of links to the party. Others point to the inexperience of National Peasant-nominated ministers as a further sign of organisational weakness (interviews with Varujan Vosganian Vosganian, leader of the Union of Right Forces, 1998 – 2001, 30 January 2009, Bucharest and with Andrei Marga, education minister from 1998 – 2000, 27 January 2009, Cluj)

party 'seniors'). He points in particular to the party congress of September 1991, the first to be held since 1936, as a sign of the harmony within the party.⁴²³ It is true that the National Peasants initially maintained a greater degree of organisational unity than the National Liberals – the cracks in the party appeared later (at a time when the liberal family was in the process of re-uniting after a string of splits). The spark for the crisis within the National Peasants was the prolonged demise of Victor Ciorbea's government which is described in detail in chapter three. The focus of discontent with the party's ageing leadership at this time was the *Brasov Group*, named after a meeting of 40 parliamentarians and local leaders who met in the ski resort of Poiana Brasov.⁴²⁴ The Brasov Group quickly became associated with a bid to topple Ciorbea and replace him as Prime Minister with party General Secretary Radu Vasile.⁴²⁵

Radu Vasile was the leader of a younger cohort of political leaders within the Convention whose political roots did not trace back to the Seniors or to the leading figures of the 1989 revolution. Vasile succeeded Victor Ciorbea as Prime Minister thanks in part to the support of Petre Roman and the Democrats (see chapter three above) and he seems to have been perceived as something of a cuckoo in the nest. Ciorbea's weak position meant that Constantinescu effectively ran the government as the key decision maker. But the dynamics changed when Vasile took over:

Emil Constantinescu had a harder time running the show when Radu Vasile took over. Vasile had a base in the National Peasants and so he was able to oppose Constantinescu. Vasile was more skilled at negotiation.⁴²⁶

Yet, despite the perception that Vasile was a stronger, more political astute Prime Minister, even he complained of his inability to sack ministers for political reasons.⁴²⁷ Ultimately he, too, fell victim to unmet expectations and coalition manoeuvrings, being replaced in late 1999 by Mugur Isarescu.

⁴²³ Diaconescu, *Revolutie*, pp. 81 – 88.

⁴²⁴ Grupul Brasov se ridica impotriva influentei dlor Gabriel Tepelea si Nicolae Ionescu-Galbeni, *Romania Libera*, 26 March 1998, page 3

⁴²⁵ Un sindrom al luptei pentru putere din PNTCD, *Romania Libera*, 27 March 1998, page 2. Diaconescu also identifies the Brasov Group having been formed by supporters of Vasile: Diaconescu, *Revolutie*, page 223.

⁴²⁶ Interview with Daniel Daianu.

⁴²⁷ Liliana Pop.

The enduring significance of the Brasov Group as a faction within the National Peasant Party is difficult to discern (once its objective of removing Ciorbea had been achieved) and it may well represent no more than the first steps in a leadership bid based on personality rather than a coherent programme for internal party reform. But it was symbolic of the inter-generational strains within the formation that it was created at all. A further schism within the National Peasants followed Ciorbea's removal from office as the former premier became a focus for more radical anti-Communist voices among the National Peasants. The summer of 1998 saw the first appearance of the description of this group as the National Peasant's Taliban.⁴²⁸ Ciorbea eventually led a break-away party – the National Christian Democratic Alliance – which made little electoral impact before re-merging with the National Peasants following the 2000 election defeat.⁴²⁹ Further initiatives to prompt internal reform followed. Dudu Ionescu, who at a later date briefly led the National Peasants, launched the Initiative for Unity of the National Peasant Party which called for improved internal communication and an effort to re-assert Christian Democratic ideals as the leading force within the government.⁴³⁰ But, in the absence of a significant and coherent alternative centre of power within the party the gerontocracy retained its leading role until the election of 2000, even as the vitality of the party ebbed away in the face of impending electoral defeat.

The changes of strategy made by the family of liberal parties seems to have been less driven by inter-generational differences in outlook. The withdrawal of the National Liberals from the Convention, the splits within the party, its return to the Convention and subsequent reunification are as significant in influencing the development of the Convention as the changes that took place in the National Peasant Party, though. Both Campeanu and the party's much younger executive secretary Valeriu Stoica were seen as pragmatists who promoted a centrist agenda.⁴³¹ Mircea Ionescu-Quintus was one of the

⁴²⁸ Pragmatismul talibanilor, *Romania Libera*, 13 July 1998, page 2.

⁴²⁹ The Alliance was formed in April 1999 and ran candidates in the 2000 local elections. It joined the Democratic Convention 2000 alliance for the General Election of that year (see below) and merged with the National Peasants in June 2001. Preda and Soare, page 179.

⁴³⁰ Initiativa pentru Unitatea PNTCD, *Romania Libera*, 17 October 1998, page 2. The failure of National Peasant leaders to assert Christian Democrat values within the government was a common theme of criticism after 1998 – a reflection of the feeling that the party had lost the initiative within the coalition to the Democrat Party.

⁴³¹ Lucrarile Forumului ideilor liberale, *Romania Libera*, 27 July 1991, page 3.

Seniors but once he assumed the leadership of the party he allowed a younger cohort of leaders to determine the direction of the party. Among those who stayed loyal to the National Liberal Party throughout there seemed to be a shared acceptance of the party's role as a moderating influence that should be achieved by seeking accommodation with the party in power. Ideology and personality played a role in the internal battles: the neo-liberal businessman Dinu Patriciu seemed regularly to be at the centre of controversies within the liberal movement.⁴³²

That said, Valeriu Stoica considers an opportunity for liberal unity to have been missed in early 1993 thanks to the division that had grown up between the Seniors and the young radicals. Stoica quit his executive post but not the party in protest at Campeanu's decision to leave the Convention. Following the disastrous performance of the National Liberals in the parliamentary elections he led efforts to get the party leadership to take responsibility for the results and he supported the successful move to replace Campeanu as leader of the party with Mircea Ionescu-Quintus. Almost simultaneous to the change of National Liberal leadership was the congress which formed the Liberal Party '93 from the National Liberal Youth Wing and the National Liberal Party - Democratic Convention. Stoica pushed for reunification of the liberal groups but he and others were expelled from the National Liberal Party instead.⁴³³

4.4 Conclusion

The evidence of contemporary perceptions suggests that the different historical experiences that divided the key Convention elites played an important role in the organisational development of the centre right, at least initially.

The views of those involved at the time are inevitably coloured by their own partisan considerations but their perceptions are nonetheless significant in understanding the internal dynamics of the Convention. For Varujan Vosganian, for example, the problem at the core of the Convention was the division between the civic society activists and the historic parties and the lack of a clearly dominant force:

⁴³² Banii si politica in PNL-AT, *Romania Libera*, 2 July 1992, page 3.

⁴³³ Valeriu Stoica, *Provocari*, pp. 28 – 36.

The Convention was a big balloon but each party within it had a small level of support. There was a difference in quality between the National Liberals and the National Peasants: the liberals were more skilled, younger and more involved in economic life. The National Peasant Party was an anachronism. Its leaders were motivated by anti-Communism but the main priority [for the country] was modernisation. They had no ideas about the future. There was a fundamental structural problem for the Convention: it was a Centaur, half party and half civil society organisation. The civil society organisations had the capacity to vote and that created strange pressures in the Convention.⁴³⁴

For Valerian Stan the Seniors were the main block on Convention unity as they re-fought old battles between the National Peasants and the National Liberals and refused to allow a new generation of leaders to come to develop:

The old leaders were very important. They refused to allow new leaders to come through. Some of these new people remained in marginal roles, some gave up, some joined other parties such as the Democrats.⁴³⁵

It is clear that when the Democratic Convention was formed there was no intention that it should evolve into a single party or even a permanent alliance. It was a more substantial structure than co-operation projects that had previously been discussed where parties had discussed collaborating in two-stage local election contests or even running joint lists of candidates but with a minimal common manifesto. The arrival on the scene of the Civic Alliance created the glue for the new project but its aim was still minimal in scope – the creation of a politics without Communism and quasi-Communists.⁴³⁶

Zoe Petre summarises the situation:

The Democratic Convention was basically an electoral alliance. The parties were so jealous of their autonomy that they never accepted anything more than this. As proof, they had separate parliamentary groups, although this did give them more positions in

⁴³⁴ Interview with Varujan Vosganian.

⁴³⁵ Interview with Valerian Stan.

⁴³⁶ Opozitia Unita – o alternative, *Romania Libera*, 14 November 1991, page 1.

the parliamentary structure. Each week we on the outside were puzzled and frustrated that another co-operation project was dropped by the parties.⁴³⁷

The elites within the historic parties retained greater loyalty to those parties than to the Convention itself, driven in large part by the dominant position of leadership cadres who had been active within those parties before the Communist era. This legacy factor resulted in resistance to complete organisational integration on the centre-right and a particular set of values being dominant among an important element of the Convention leadership.

But by the time the Convention came to power these legacy factors were beginning to fade. Internally both of the main historic parties faced pressures from a cohort of new 'professional politicians' who were ambitious to advance their careers and ideas. For whatever reason the National Liberals seemed better able to cope with this transition from an old to a new generation of leaders with the likes of Valeriu Stoica, Dinu Patriciu and Calin Tariceanu gaining leadership positions with the support of older leaders like Mircea Ionescu Quintus. Perhaps it was because ideological division gave some greater form to the contest (with the younger generation promoting more radical liberalisation of the economy); perhaps it was because the structural divisions within the party created by Campeanu's decision to leave the Convention created the opportunity for the younger leaders to gain greater leverage. Perhaps it was something to do with the party's genetics, its self image as being more open, forward looking and pragmatic.

Within the National Peasants, the death of Corneliu Coposu seemed to bring these internal divisions to a point of crisis. Coposu's successor, Ion Diaconescu acknowledges the leading role of Coposu in developing the post-Communist version of the party but, understandably, he rejects claims that Coposu's death meant the death of the National Peasant Party:

Of course, Coposu was chosen by us as president of the party, as the first among equals, because of his multiple qualities. A leader of the party from the gallery of great Romanian political figures, descending from Maniu and Michalache, Coposu had a profound understanding and a wide vision of politics and the Romanian nation.

⁴³⁷ Interview with Zoe Petre, February 2009, Bucharest.

But tens of thousands of others who were devoted to this party also fought... the sacrifice was not limited to Coposu. The large part of the old guard who formed the party leadership of the National Peasant Party shared a similar background to Coposu, starting in the 1930s before the Second World War, fighting against all dictatorship and culminating in the dramatic battle against the Communist regime. It is clear that this event at the last moment [Coposu's death] was not a fatal blow to the National Peasant Party.⁴³⁸

Pavel and Huiu suggest that Coposu's death in fact led to the 'unblocking' of opposition politics as Constantinescu, freed from obligations to his sponsor, was able to take the more pragmatic line that resulted in the break with the more radical anti-Communists associated with the Civic Alliance.⁴³⁹ But Constantinescu lacked the will, and the power base, to craft a united formation. His academic background made him poorly suited to the demands of mass electoral politics and he proved to be a poor leader of a complex political organism. And as Pavel and Huiu suggest, Constantinescu's election to the presidency meant that the Convention had no one to lead it after the 1996 election victory:

After Constantinescu's victory the Convention no longer had a leader who would be preoccupied with... the accommodation of divergent points of view and finding a consensus. This role had historically been performed by Coposu and then by Constantinescu, helped by the National Peasant Party (because the Convention had proved an excellent electoral vehicle) and the civic society associations. The new president elected by the Convention was Ion Diaconescu who was also president of the National Peasant Party. A few days later Diaconescu became the Triple President as he was elected president of the Chamber of Deputies.⁴⁴⁰

In office the Seniors themselves seem to have been more flexible than might have been expected. The battles over the Dumitrescu lustration laws and the contemplation of coalition options with the Social Democrats mentioned above appear to underline two points. The first is that some of the Seniors were willing to compromise the unity of the

⁴³⁸ Diaconescu, *Revolutie*, page 169.

⁴³⁹ Pavel and Huiu, page 242 and 461.

⁴⁴⁰ Pavel and Huiu page 318.

Convention to protect their own personal positions. But both events could also be characterised as underlining the strength of institutionalised loyalty to the National Peasant Party itself. Very few of the Seniors split from the party in the decade up to the 2000 elections (and indeed the survivors of the group largely stayed loyal to the party after it fell from power after 2000) despite the many difficult decisions the Party faced. Ion Ratiu is a good example of this. Despite his defeat by Emil Constantinescu in the contest to be Convention presidential candidate in 1992 Ratiu remained loyal to the National Peasant Party and the Democratic Convention despite regular exhortations from his friends to run as an independent candidate.⁴⁴¹ He appears to have come closest to wavering when in mid August 1992 (he claims) he was offered the candidacy of the National Liberal Party, believing this would force Constantinescu to withdraw in his favour. The scheme came to nothing.⁴⁴² Even Dumitrescu was expelled rather than resigning as the conflict over his lustration law deepened.⁴⁴³ Instead it tended to be the younger, newer recruits to the party who left it when it didn't meet their own immediate aims – Prime Ministers Victor Ciorbea and Radu Vasile included and ultimately President Constantinescu too who had joined the party in the mid 1990s at Coposu's request. The loyalty to the party was a source of strength for the National Peasants as an organisation but also, potentially, a block on wider opposition unity – on any efforts to craft a new centre-right force out of the Convention project. This sense of shared interest may well have been reinforced by the patronage networks that were constructed by a number of the Seniors and which are referred to in the early part of this chapter. But it is important to note that whatever their personal animosities – and they often appeared to be intense – most of the Seniors group remained with their parties to the end.

Although dominant at the beginning, the Seniors were challenged by younger leaders because of their age and outlook. As will be shown in chapter five, it was the Civic Alliance that was the motive force behind the creation of the Democratic Convention. But the Civic Alliance was essentially an anti-party that gave far greater priority to the implementation of policy demands than to electoral concerns or structural party building.

⁴⁴¹ Ratiu, page 219, page 245 etc.

⁴⁴² Ratiu, page 274.

⁴⁴³ Lavinia Stan, *Lustration*.

As such it was unable to contribute to strategic choices that would have consolidated the Convention's position. Its genesis was the moment of Ceausescu's overthrow. The absence of a Communist-era domestic opposition meant that its leaders were unused to the practice of politics and their values were forged in the heady, idealistic days of December 1989.

The civic activists were disappointed by the Convention's failure to follow their idealistic approach in government and were particularly surprised to find that one of their number – Emil Constantinescu – was chief among the pragmatists. But as has been shown, Constantinescu's background was rather different from the leading dissidents who shaped the Civic Alliance and he appears to have been practically excluded from the pack by other civic activists even before he was elected.

So the evidence here suggests that the Convention's dominant leadership elites were shaped by formative experiences and that those experiences were very different.

It is also apparent that the importance of the division between the two elite groups eroded over time. This means that, while it is possible to attribute some of the structural weaknesses that characterised the Convention to the dominance of this legacy of division, it does not seem to offer a complete explanation for its ultimate failure: by the time the Convention entered government a new generation of leaders (and potential leaders) had appeared who had the option of developing new strategies for the centre right that were less influenced by either events of December 1989 or the memories of what had gone before.

Chapter 5: Exit, voice and precious little loyalty, case studies in the organisational development of the Democratic Convention

Under any economic, social, or political system, individuals, business firms, and organizations in general are subject to lapses from efficient, rational, law abiding, virtuous or otherwise functional behaviour. No matter how well a society's basic institutions are devised, failures of some actors to live up to the behaviour which is expected of them are bound to occur if only for the most accidental of reasons.⁴⁴⁴

This chapter aims to explore the organisational choices made by Convention leaders and how they might have contributed to its ultimate failure. Referring back to chapter one, the general proposition made was that a unified structure would present higher barriers to exit for elite actors and thus will be more likely to succeed than an electoral coalition. In the specific case of the Democratic Convention it is suggested that the involvement of non-party formations would weaken its organisational coherence (by diversifying its objectives and incentive structures). It is also proposed that the 'flat' organisational structure which evened out power among the various members would reduce its ability to cohere around a single set of objectives. And the elite-centred nature of the organisation is also expected to weaken the organisation's ability to endure and broaden its appeal as constituent entities lacked the incentives to substitute their own goals for those of the Convention.

The first part of the chapter gives further detail on the Convention's organisational structure, adding to the information provided in chapter two above. It explores the inner tensions of the Convention further by focusing on three key points in its history. It attempts to test impact of the Convention's organisational choices on its viability and breadth via its responses to three key crises each affecting different parts of the alliance and each illustrating organisational responses to the differing incentive structures affecting the main member organisations.

The Convention was a loose alliance operating in a highly polarised political environment. Its leaders lacked experience of running mass parties and in fighting elections; many were

⁴⁴⁴ Albert O. Hirschman, *Exit, Voice and Loyalty*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, 1970, page 1.

also unfamiliar with the electoral battleground because they had lived for decades as exiles from Romanian society. And the feedback mechanisms available to political leaders in the early years of democratic politics in Romania were crude and often distrusted.⁴⁴⁵ Within the relatively small body of work exploring the performance of the Democratic Convention, there has been almost no attempt to examine the reasons for and the effects of the formation's choice of organisational structure. Huiu and Pavel describe the Convention's internal structures in some detail but theirs is a largely narrative account aimed in the main at determining whether the Convention existed in a 'real' or a 'virtual' form outside of elections and whether it ceased to exist at all in any meaningful sense after the 1996 election victory.⁴⁴⁶ Roper offers a study of the views of local party leaders regarding the performance and future development of the Convention but it does not seek to place its findings in a broader context.⁴⁴⁷ Lazaroiu's contribution is set out in chapter 1 but although it identifies a number of possible explanations for the Convention's defeat in the 2000 elections, it does not explore why the Convention's organisational structure was unable to cope with the strains of governing.⁴⁴⁸ The journal *Sfera Politicii* has published a number of insightful articles, particularly focusing on aspects of the formation's collapse but these are generally (well informed) opinion pieces rather than derived from systematic research.⁴⁴⁹ So it is necessary to reconstruct motives behind the Convention's organisational choices.

5.1 Convention governance structures

The three main elements of Democratic Convention governance at a national level were the Council, the Executive Committee and the Presidency.⁴⁵⁰ A National Consultative Committee was added later.⁴⁵¹ The Executive Committee consisted of two representatives

⁴⁴⁵ Politicians contesting the early elections lacked a base of knowledge about voting patterns and electoral behaviour. The parties of the Democratic Convention in particular sought to fill this gap by obtaining input from foreign agencies and sister parties but this was prone to misapplication. Polling was in its infancy, was unregulated and often either slanted to the desires of those procuring the data or simply inaccurate (as late as 2000, for example, *Romania Libera* carried extensive inquests into how polling organisations missed the rise of Vadim Tudor's Greater Romania Party and the impending catastrophe facing the Convention).

⁴⁴⁶ Pavel and Huiu, particularly Chapter 6.

⁴⁴⁷ Roper, *Unity and Fragmentation*.

⁴⁴⁸ Sebastian Lazaroiu authored the Romanian case study in Ucen and Surochak.

⁴⁴⁹ See in particular *Sfera Politicii* 87/88, their special edition dealing with the 2000 elections, published by FSC, Bucharest, 2001

⁴⁵⁰ Pavel and Huiu, page 290.

⁴⁵¹ Pavel and Huiu, page 292.

from each party plus representatives of the Association of Former Political Prisoners and the Civic Alliance. It was responsible for operational decisions and was effectively the most important body within the structure.⁴⁵² The Council had a more strategic remit, being responsible for approving decisions of the Executive Committee and deciding on the membership of the Convention. Every formation belonging to the Convention could send two representatives to the Council but the member organisations had just one vote each.⁴⁵³ The President of the Convention (initially, National Peasant Party leader Corneliu Coposu) acted as chair and figurehead. He was elected by a simple majority of the executive committee for a two year term (with no limits on the number of terms that could be served).⁴⁵⁴ In 1996, the National Consultative Committee was set up to involve prominent figures from the worlds of culture and business in the development of the Convention's identity – there is little indication that it fulfilled this role effectively. The Democratic Convention also operated a number of administrative departments and policy study groups although it is unclear how active these parts of the organisation ever became, particularly in view of later criticism by Civic Alliance leaders.⁴⁵⁵

Thus the formal structures of the Convention were relatively egalitarian in that each member party was equally represented regardless of relative size. This was clearly intended to avoid any one formation gaining dominance of the Convention but, despite this, the National Peasant Party quickly came to be seen as the dominant party. The National Liberals split in 1992 with a significant section of the party leaving the Convention and although the liberals were re-united within the Convention in time for the 1996 elections, by then both the historic Social Democrats and the Hungarian Democratic Union had left which meant that the National Peasants were clearly the largest political party in the Convention for a significant part of its history. However, the governance mechanisms of the Convention constrained the ability of the National Peasant Party to fully exploit its leading role. Instead, the external sponsor organisations – the civic society groups – held a pivotal position. The Civic Alliance gained a moral authority not just from its leading

⁴⁵² Pavel and Huiu, page 290.

⁴⁵³ Pavel and Huiu, page 291.

⁴⁵⁴ Pavel and Huiu, page 291.

⁴⁵⁵ Interview with Iulia Huiu (co-author of the only book-length history of the Convention), August 2008, Bucharest. See also Civic Alliance, *Condițiile Rămănerii Alianței Civice În Convenția Democrată*, Bucharest, 12 December 1997. www.aliantacivica.ro/documente, accessed 17 May 2008.

members' refusal to pursue state office but also from the active role it played in bringing together the opposition parties and in holding the Convention together:

The Civic Alliance people were essential for their capacity for political communication between the parties. [Civic Alliance leader] Anna Blandiana was extremely respectful to the old gentlemen and devoted to the co-operation project and she never wanted an official position.⁴⁵⁶

But as well as acting as a binding agent in opposition, when the objectives were clear and un-muddled by the realities of power, the seeds of a destructive disillusionment lay in the origin and organisational objectives of the Civic Alliance which set it apart from the historic parties and gave it both a sense of moral superiority and a clearly different set of objectives that were policy based rather than based on the pursuit of office:

The Civic Alliance is a unique movement. It was born in the confusion and despair of 1990. It was based on the sacrifice of those who were killed or injured in the Revolution, the sacrifice of those who were beaten by the miners, their sacrifice meant they gave up their personal lives to campaign for an idea... The Civic Alliance is an organisation born after the fall of Communism, it gains its legitimacy from belief and sacrifice. It was born not in the courts but in the streets, in the arena, in a moment in which history stood in a dangerous balance towards a disastrous future for Romania.⁴⁵⁷

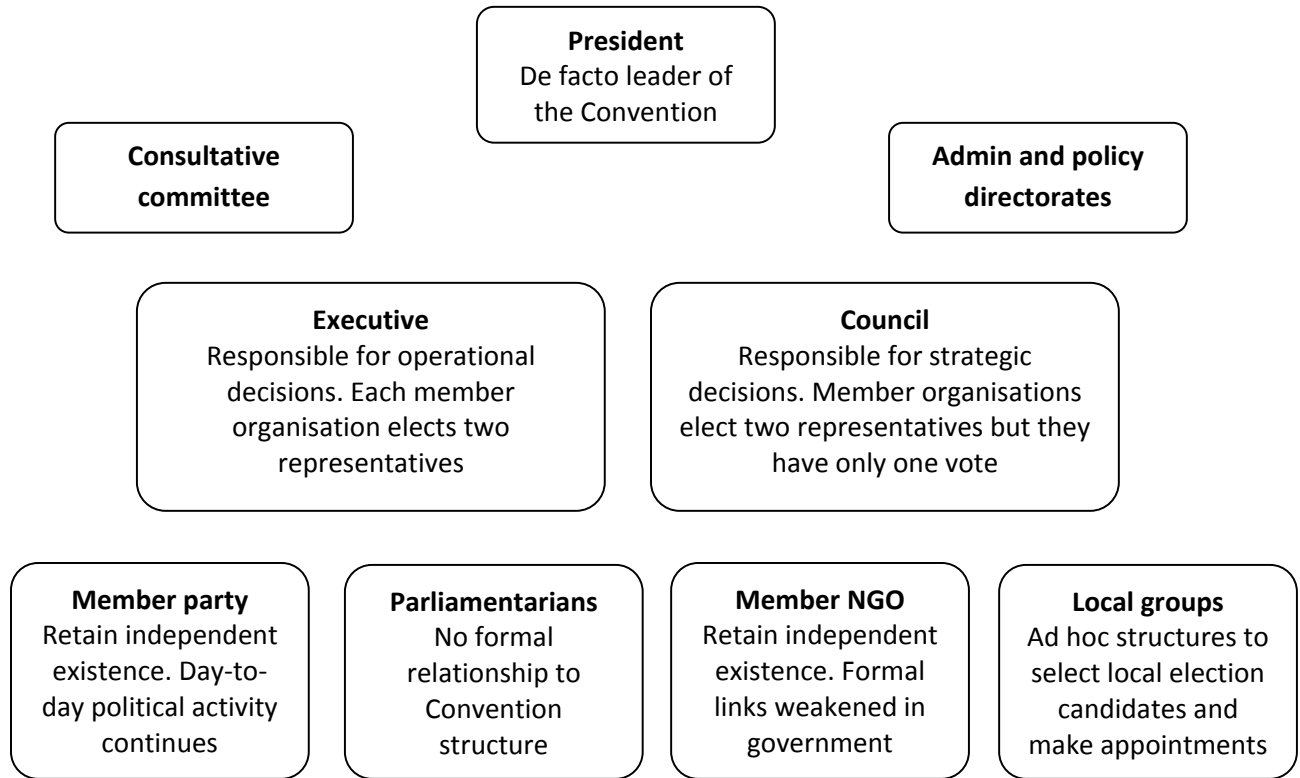
So the structures of the Convention were designed to balance power between member parties whose relative strength had been barely tested in the electoral arena. The balance was shifted by the National Liberals' decision to leave the formation at a crucial time, giving the National Peasant Party the opportunity to establish an internal dominance thanks to its close links with civil society member organisations. But the party's leading position was not so complete as to allow it to use the Convention to dominate the centre-right space

⁴⁵⁶ Interview with Zoe Petre, chief political counsellor to President Emil Constantinescu (and one of the President's closest and longest serving collaborators), February 2009, Bucharest.

⁴⁵⁷ Emil Constantinescu addressing the 4th National Congress of the Civic Alliance. *Congresul Aliantei Civice, Romania Libera*, 26 February 1996, page 3.

in politics. Instead it relied on the Convention to provide the shield of a wider organisational reach and public credibility.

Table 15: Organisational structure of the Democratic Convention



5.2 The party continues: political activity in the constituent organisations

The core purpose of the Convention was to create a unified opposition to the Communist successor left: bringing together the historic parties which had established themselves as the leading opposition organisations in the wake of the revolution; civil society groups; and a number of newer political formations that had established themselves organisationally to a greater or lesser extent (most notably the Hungarian Democratic Union and the Ecologist parties.) Throughout the Convention's existence, though, the constituent parties retained their independent identities with the elements of normal political life – party congresses, the constitution of parliamentary caucuses for example – operating at a party level rather than being organised in the name of the Convention. Civil society groups – particularly the Civic Alliance - provided the pressure for co-operation and worked hard to keep the

fractious alliance together and this gave them a powerful role within the organisation. Nevertheless, the internal life of the Convention was dominated by disputes between the political parties as they strove to attain their own operational goals.

The National Peasant Party was ever-present in the Convention and was the dominant force within the formation. As the successors to the pre-Communist National Peasant Party, the leaders of the party shared a powerful institutionalised memory of ‘stolen victory’ in the 1946 election and of pre-war electoral strength.⁴⁵⁸ Despite winning less than 3% of the vote in the presidential elections of 1990, the party saw its natural role to be leading the opposition to the ‘continuing Communism’ of the National Salvation Front (and subsequently Ion Iliescu’s Social Democrats). As the dominant party in the Convention, the National Peasants retained a strong commitment to the formation, seeing it as the most effective vehicle for delivering its primary objective: control of government at a nation level. At the same time its clear leadership role was a source of tension with the other parties. The National Peasants were often accused (by their liberal colleagues) of using the civil society groups to reinforce their control of the organisation.⁴⁵⁹ The links between two of the leading civil society groups and the National Peasant Party are clear: the party’s presidential candidate in 1990, Ion Ratiu, led the World Union of Free Romanians;⁴⁶⁰ and party leader Corneliu Coposu turned down the invitation to lead the Association of Former Political Prisoners because of a desire for the organisations to be *seen* as separate – instead the Association’s first president was a less well known National Peasant Party official, Constantin Latea.⁴⁶¹ But this should not, perhaps, be overplayed since the Civic Alliance was the civil society group with by far the biggest influence and it strenuously maintained its party political independence.

The liberal family showed a remarkable tendency to fracture throughout the 1990s due both to disputes over strategy and over ideology. But this was coupled with an institutional resilience on the part of the National Liberal Party which led to the party remaining the focal point for liberal elites. The almost dizzying list of breakaways and mergers in this

⁴⁵⁸ See Chapter 2 above.

⁴⁵⁹ Interview with Iulia Huiu, August 2008, Bucharest.

⁴⁶⁰ Ion Ratiu, page 12

⁴⁶¹ Ion Diaconescu, *Revolutie*, page 19

time included the National Liberal Party-Democratic Convention which was established by those favouring co-operation with the Convention when National Liberal leader Radu Campeanu withdrew the National Liberals from the Convention in April 1992⁴⁶²; the National Liberal Party – Youth Wing formed in July 1990 to promote a radical (neo-) liberal platform; the Youth Wing in turn evolved into the Liberal Party '93 which joined, then left the Democratic Convention before forming the National Liberal Alliance with the Civic Alliance Party for the 1996 elections.⁴⁶³ The Liberal Party '93 fused with the National Liberal Party – Democratic Convention in 1997 to form the Liberal Party which subsequently merged back into the National Liberals.⁴⁶⁴ The dynamics of the relationship between the Convention and its liberal members changed with the revolving membership of the various parties.

At the beginning the National Liberals sat as uneasy but effectively equal partners with the National Peasants. Campeanu's calculation that he would achieve a better result if the National Liberals ran on its own in the elections changed this dynamic entirely. The smaller liberal formations could not compete with the National Peasants for influence within the Convention and by the time the National Liberal Party returned for the 1996 elections the National Peasants had firmly entrenched their leading position, leading one analyst to see Campeanu's decision as the biggest single cause of structural weakness in the Democratic Convention as it created a disequilibrium that endured to the end.⁴⁶⁵

After the 1996 elections, momentum grew for a reunification of the liberal family under the umbrella of the National Liberal Party. Justice minister Valeriu Stoica, launched the process of re-uniting the various factions following the party's 1997 Congress where he was elected as 'First Vice-President' of the party.⁴⁶⁶ Not for the first, or the last, time the party's internal arguments were seen as proxies for battles between business interests competing for influence within the party.⁴⁶⁷ Stoica had a clear vision to create a broad,

⁴⁶² Cristian Preda and Sorina Soare, *Regimul, Partidele si Sistemul Politic din Romania*, Nemira, Bucharest, 2008, page 206. The party ran candidates on the Democratic Convention list in 1992 and 1996

⁴⁶³ Cristian Preda and Sorina Soare, page 205. The National Liberal Alliance failed to cross the threshold to secure parliamentary representation in the elections of 1996

⁴⁶⁴ Stan Stoica

⁴⁶⁵ Laurentiu Stefan-Scalat, *Fantoma lui Radu Campeanu*, Sfera Politicii 87-88, FSC, Bucharest, 2000

⁴⁶⁶ De facto leader behind eighty year old party president Mircea Ionescu-Quintus. Abraham, page 369

⁴⁶⁷ Congresul PNL – o sansa pentru o miscare liberala puternica, *Romania Libera*, 19 May 1997, p. 2

centre-right formation based on a single party structure with the National Liberals at its centre but he did not possess the political capital to drive such a project forward in the 1990s.⁴⁶⁸ The critical mass belonging to the National Liberal Party meant that in the short term a strategy based on consumption of the smaller factions was a more credible option than co-operation, as Table 8 illustrates.

Table 16: Relative strength of various liberal parties, 1998⁴⁶⁹

Party	Number of members	No. of local branches	Number of offices	Elected mayors
National Liberal Party	55,175	1,546	305	235
Liberal Party ('93 + Dem. Convention)	7,029	347	33	19
Civic Alliance Party	6,672	262	45	28
Alternative Romania Party ⁴⁷⁰	4,671	114	14	1
National Liberal Party – Campeanu ⁴⁷¹	2,142	157	14	6
Union of Liberals 'Bratianu' ⁴⁷²	50	3	2	0

The Civic Alliance Party also had a difficult relationship with the Convention but the source of this tension was more personalised. One commentator in the run-up to the 1992 elections asked who could gain from the division between the Civic Alliance and the Civic Alliance Party since he claimed that there was 'no fundamental difference of strategy or philosophy' between them.⁴⁷³ The decision to form the party had been taken at the Alliance congress in June 1991.⁴⁷⁴ The party had a liberal orientation and there was a cross-over in membership with the Civic Alliance movement, which consciously modelled

⁴⁶⁸ Valeriu Stoica, *Unificarea dreptei*, Humanitas, Bucharest, 2008, particularly chapter 2.

⁴⁶⁹ The table appears in a newspaper report of a strategy meeting of the National Liberal's Permanent Central Bureau. The origin of the figures is unclear. *Strategia liberala prinde contur*, *Romania Libera*, 26 March 1998, page 2.

⁴⁷⁰ A small neo-liberal formation that evolved into the Union of Right Forces. Having run as part of the Democratic Convention 2000 in the 2000 elections it merged into the National Liberal Party in 2001.

⁴⁷¹ After Ionescu-Quintus led the National Liberals back into the Democratic Convention Campeanu left the party with his followers in March 1995. Campeanu did not re-join the National Liberals until 2003. Florin Abraham, pp. 369 – 370.

⁴⁷² The Liberal Union 'Bratianu' was formed in 1990 professing a 'centrist-liberal' ideology. It won less than 1% of the vote in each of the parliamentary elections it contested (running alone in 1990, 1992 and 2000 and together with Campeanu's party in 1996). Preda and Soare, page 226.

⁴⁷³ De ce tensiune intre AC si PAC?, *Romania Libera*, 6 February 1992, page 2.

⁴⁷⁴ Alianta Civica Va Avea Un Partid, *Romania Libera*, 6 July 1991, page 2.

itself on the Czech Civic Forum.⁴⁷⁵ The Civic Alliance Party never established a membership or organisation close to the size of its civil society cousin.⁴⁷⁶ The Civic Alliance Party gained strength within the Democratic Convention from not being one of the historic parties but the dominating and abrasive character of party leader Nicolae Manolescu meant that the party was prone to defections and to conflicts with the Convention leadership.⁴⁷⁷ Frustrated in attempts to establish a leading role for itself, the Civic Alliance Party broke from the Convention, it co-founded the National Liberal Alliance but the formation failed to cross the 3% threshold to secure parliamentary representation in the 1996 elections and Manolescu won just 0.7% of the vote in the presidential poll. Manolescu acknowledged that his party had lost out as a result of leaving the Convention and in March 1998 the party merged with the National Liberals.⁴⁷⁸

The third party (alongside the National Liberals and the Civic Alliance Party) which initially sought to compete with the National Peasants for a leading role in the Convention and which ultimately opted for exit having failed in its bid was the ‘historic’ Social Democratic Party. The party was the re-incarnation of a pre-Communist formation which had been forcibly merged into the Communist Party in the 1940s. The party’s leader – Sergiu Cunesu – shared the antagonism towards the Communist-successor left felt by the leaders of the other historic parties and supported cross-party co-operation among the opposition but the party was the poor relation of the triumvirate because of its smaller size and lack of a heroic resistance story.⁴⁷⁹ The party’s social democratic political programme also made it a rather incongruous member of the Convention and its size meant opportunities to gain the benefits of office were limited by the operation of the ‘algorithm’ within the Convention. Cunesu failed in his bid to become the Convention’s presidential candidate in 1992 despite being a potential compromise choice between the divisive options

⁴⁷⁵ As the new party was being formed, one Alliance conference in Sibiu was addressed by a representative of the Civic Forum who set out the strategy, beliefs and approach of the Czech party. *De ce un nou partid? Romania Libera*, 26 June 1991, page 1.

⁴⁷⁶ Civic Alliance leader, Ana Blandiana, stated in March 1992 that PAC had just 6,000 members across the country and the Civic Alliance, 85,000. Ion Ratiu, page 78.

⁴⁷⁷ Interview with civil society activist Renate Weber, Brussels, June 2008.

⁴⁷⁸ PAC a pierdut prin iesirea din Conventie, *Romania Libera*, 6 November 1997, page 3.

⁴⁷⁹ Noi nu ne vom reorienta politica, *Romania Libera*, 7 July 1990, page 3 (interview with Cunesu). The Social Democrats only fought one election – the 1990 parliamentary poll – as an independent force, winning a little over 0.5% of the vote and electing two Deputies.

of Ratiu and Manolescu.⁴⁸⁰ Ahead of the 1996 elections the historic Social Democrats left the Conventon and formed the Union of Social Democrats with Petre Roman's Democrat Party.⁴⁸¹

5.3 The Convention at the grass roots

All of the parties that comprised the Convention were characterised by strong central leaderships and rigid vertical power structures. There is little sign that alternative internal power structures developed in any of the main parties – for example in parliamentary caucuses. The importance of local government, though, and in particular of the large number of elected mayors, does appear to have generated a lively local political scene.

More so even than at the national level, on a local level the Democratic Convention never attained a distinctive existence beyond that of an election symbol. Local structures were set up to manage relations between the member groups although in many places one party was dominant meaning they had an effective monopoly on decision making.⁴⁸²

The role of personalised resource networks helps to explain resistance to the substitution of the individual party organisations either with a more permanent and tangible Convention presence or with a single unified party, since these structures (and the rent-seeking opportunities they offered) would potentially be threatened by such a move – a lesson possibly learned from the organisation of the National Salvation Front. By virtue of its dominance in the process of power-shift in 1989-90, the National Salvation Front established formidable local political power bases that in many places persist for the Social Democrats today. For voters, the rationale for opting to support the party which controlled local economic resources in a state-dominated economy is clear. This rationality was maintained as the process of privatisation spread – it was an obvious choice for those who hoped to gain from the privatisation process to ally themselves with the parties who would control the process. The parties within the Convention began to see an expansion of active support in the run up to the 1996 election and a corresponding decline in that backing as the

⁴⁸⁰ See chapter six below for more on the presidential candidate selection.

⁴⁸¹ The party subsequently split with the Democrat Party and went on to form the 'Social Democratic Pole' with the Iliescu-led Social Democrats for the 2000 elections (despite opposition from Cunescu) before merging into Iliescu's party.

⁴⁸² Pavel and Huiu, pp. 286 – 310.

2000 elections approached and it became apparent that the formation would struggle to hold on to power.

The evolution of party support in the north western county of Mures is illustrative of this process.⁴⁸³ Small groups of National Peasant Party sympathisers had been initially set up in virtually every commune in the county. Often the motivation for joining the party was ideological – in an area where the National Liberals were relatively weak, the National Peasants were the most obvious home for opponents of Communism. Party membership began to grow in 1994-5 as people reacted to a sense of change at the national level but ideological commitment was less significant for these new members:

They [the new members] were seeking an opportunity to gain a position of power or they were people who had power in their communities; sometimes people with money and sometimes people who organised other people. They joined because they feared losing their positions. Some were members of the Social Democrats. Some joined openly and others stayed in the background.⁴⁸⁴

Funding structures, too, illustrate the extent to which success was dependent on control of local power structures. Biturca identifies four principal sources of funding for local party activities: membership fees, levies on officials, individual donations and support from the party nationally. Direct assistance from the national party was limited and came in the form of election materials and the purchase of outdoor and media advertising within the region. Individual membership subscriptions were important and naturally ebbed and flowed with the fortunes of the party. Donations were often linked to calculations of likely returns - individuals would be more inclined to make donations if the party was perceived as able to deliver a return by gaining power either locally or nationally. The levies on elected officials and on party appointees were crucial: members of parliament, councillors, mayors and the directors of the local privatisation funds all paid a percentage of their income into party funds.

⁴⁸³ I am grateful to Petru Biturca for the information provided here. Mr Biturca was a member of the Mures County executive bureau of the National Peasant Party from 1996 to 2000 and from 2000-2003 was the party's county general secretary.

⁴⁸⁴ Interview with Petru Biturca, 17 May 2008, Targu Mures.

As the Democratic Convention came to power in 1996 with a programme promising accelerated privatisation, it became clear that the presidency of the local privatisation fund (FPS) would take on considerable significance – as significant perhaps as the elected positions of mayors and councillors. The algorithm that dominated negotiations between coalition parties at national level was replicated at local level. In Mures, every public position was negotiated and a ratio of 3:1 established between appointees of the National Peasant Party and the Hungarian Democratic Union. There were no fewer than 258 directorships of the FPS to be allocated, each of whom would be expected to make a contribution to party funds.

Senior National Peasant Ion Ratiu claimed that his party was the only one in the Convention which had an organisation at local level but other evidence suggests a patchwork of local organisation across the country and across parties.⁴⁸⁵ Although the data refers to a point after the collapse of the Democratic Convention, a local government survey from 2001 shows how all parties achieved limited penetration of communities outside the larger urban centres.⁴⁸⁶ Thirty eight per cent of municipalities (all rural) reported having no political organisation on their territory and 55% reported having organisations for less than half the number of parties that were represented in parliament. Iliescu's Social Democrats had the strongest organisational network with a 100% presence in urban areas and 56% overall. For the other parties, the figures are shown in Table nine.

There is some indication from the same survey, though, that *personal* networks were significant since 94% of mayors belonged to a political party suggesting that local power brokers were able to create organisational structures if only for the temporary purposes of an election campaign. This is supported by individual cases – the National Peasant mayors of Timisoara and Targu Mures for example – both significant cities – were able to construct coalitions of support in their communities that were strong enough to survive the collapse of their party at a national level.

⁴⁸⁵ Ion Ratiu, page 15.

⁴⁸⁶ Survey by the Centre for Urban and Regional Sociology conducted in April 2001, reported in G Soos, G Toka and G Wright, *The State of Local Democracy in Central Europe*, Local Government Initiative, 2002.

Table 17: Percentage of municipalities reporting a party organisation, 2001⁴⁸⁷

Democrat Party*	37%
National Liberals* ⁺	33%
Alliance for Romania	30%
Greater Romania Party*	27%
National Peasants ⁺	20%
Hungarian Dem. Union* ⁺	11%

*Parties with representation in parliament after 2000

⁺ Parties that were some-time members of the Democratic Convention

It is notable that the large majority of mayors and local councillors are elected as party representatives not as independents. Party affiliation for local elected officials had a utility in defining their relationship to national power structures – but the degree of influence that central government had over local government meant that governing parties at national level exercised considerable pull over local officials. An illustration of the vertical pull exercised over these local power networks by national power is provided by a 2001 report of the Romanian Institute of Public Policy. It found that 22% of the mayors elected in 2000 had changed parties within a year. Eighty two per cent of those had joined the Social Democrats – the new governing party at national level which thus controlled both the allocation of economic resources to localities and the appointment of influential county prefects.⁴⁸⁸

The apparently low barriers to transfer between parties and the attraction of plentiful tradable resources at local level thus meant there was no discernable pressure from below for a stronger and more effective central organisation for the Convention. There was no clear incentive for closer co-operation at local level either since local leaders were able to operate effectively both in terms of election campaigns and in post election alliance building at the head of branches of the constituent parties without any clear advantage

⁴⁸⁷ The mayor of Targu Mures was elected in 2000 as a candidate of the National Peasant Party and re-elected in 2004 running as an independent. In Timisoara, Gheorghe Ciuhandu was re-elected in 2000, 2004 and 2008 under the National Peasant Party banner despite the collapse of the party on a national level.

⁴⁸⁸ Reported in *Romania Libera*, 5 September 2001. It should be noted that some of these transfers may have been ideologically driven since both the Democrat Party and the Alliance for Romania, parties with a social democratic outlook, moved towards closer co-operation with the National Liberals (and thus to the political right) after the 2000 elections.

being offered by the Convention structure. As a result of the absence of pressures to create a more integrated leadership structure for the Convention it was unable to withstand the pressures placed on it as an organisation that arose when the various member entities sought to secure their own objective preferences.

The constituent organisations retained their separate identities at a national and a local level and there was a lack of Convention-focused leadership which meant that the political actors retained a greater loyalty to their party than to the Convention. In addition the inclusion of civic society groups that specifically rejected the rewards that political parties often strive for – office holding and the ability to distribute resources to supporters – meant that there was a part of the Convention that had substantially different incentive structures to the political parties.

5.4 Crisis points: case studies in organisational failure

The following sections focus on three key crisis points in the Convention's history in order to illustrate the organisational weaknesses in the organisation which contributed to its ultimate failure.

The decision to focus on crisis points is derived from the assumption that it is how an entity responds to crises that will best expose the resilience of its organisational structure. The withdrawal of the Hungarian Democratic Union from the Convention in 1995 is the first event examined. It illustrates both the tensions caused by the policy demands of nationalist groups and the problem of the lack of electoral benefit that the Convention offered to the Hungarian Democratic Union (since the formation had already maximised its support within its potential electoral constituency and had constructed an organisation that appeared capable of maintaining that loyalty). The second period examined is the extended conflict within the Convention-led coalition government which resulted in the dismissal of Victor Ciorbea as Prime Minister at the end of March 1998. This period throws the role of civil society groups (particularly the Civic Alliance) within the Convention into the spotlight.⁴⁸⁹

⁴⁸⁹ Use of the term 'civil society group' is potentially problematic as, in general useage, the term covers a range of different activities and organisations. It is used in this text to refer to the non-party, non-governmental groups that established themselves in Romania after December 1989 to campaign for democracy, civil rights and, in general, against the Iliescu-led left. This is the context in which the term was commonly used in Romania during the period studied.

The Convention was confronted with the challenges of governing in coalition with the pragmatic and politically savvy former ‘Frontists’ in the Democrat Party while trying to reconcile the ideologically driven policy objectives of the civil society groups. The crisis placed enormous centrifugal pressures on the Convention as other members responded to the internal weaknesses it exposed with their own increased demands. The analysis concludes with the period running up to the electoral calamity of November 2000 as Convention members struggled to re-create a competitive formation. The National Peasants had established a leading (but not completely dominant) position in the Convention and, as the election approached, the other major national party in the formation – the National Liberal Party – sought to gain a higher price in terms of internal influence in return for remaining within the Democratic Convention.

The three crises each have different origins – the first arose from the internal policy demands of a group (the Hungarian Democratic Union) that had a markedly different incentive structure for membership of the Convention than the other member organisations; the second was created by exogenous pressure from one of the Convention’s coalition partners in government (the Democrat Party); the third was a bid for an enlarged internal role by the National Liberal Party in response to perceptions of organisational decline and calculations of the potential electoral consequences of possible break-up. In a broad sense the crises also touch on each of the three ideological tensions within the formation: nationalism versus the demands of ethnic minorities; anti-Communism versus pragmatism towards reform; and the liberalism of the National Liberals versus the Christian Democracy of the National Peasants.

5.5 The other nation: The Hungarian Democratic Union and the Convention

The politics of nationalism has attracted much academic interest and a rich and varied literature over many years. Following the fall of Communism in Europe there was a burst of interest in radical nationalism spurred by images of the region as an ethnic powder-keg awaiting re-ignition by the sparks of irredentism and revenge politics.

While the worst fears of recidivism and inter-ethnic conflict in most of the region were not realised, ethnicity operated as a influential cleavage in post-Communist Romanian politics.

As a result, the Hungarian Democratic Union established and maintained a near monopoly on the votes of Romania's ethnic Hungarian community.⁴⁹⁰ Brubaker indicated that for the ethnic Hungarian community in Cluj, voting for the Hungarian Democratic Union was the equivalent of participation in a national census – turnout was thus maximised and for most it was simply inconceivable to vote for any other party.⁴⁹¹ One ethnic-Hungarian politician suggests that the social homogeneity of the village-based Hungarian community also aids the Democratic Union in retaining its political monopoly.⁴⁹²

Part of the explanation for its sustained success may lie in the formation's unusual organisational structure. It was not constituted as a political party in the ordinary sense but as an alliance of political and civic society groups representing the Hungarian minority in Romania. By May 1991 it was reporting a membership of 533,000, around one third of the ethnic Hungarian population.⁴⁹³ A variety of platforms exist within the formation which, nominally at least, represent the various strands of opinion within the community – liberal, social democrat, Christian democrat and reformist.⁴⁹⁴ In effect, the formation offered the community a shadow governing structure: the president is elected for a four year term and he is supported by an executive president whose functions are designed to mirror those of a prime minister.⁴⁹⁵ The links between the Union's political structure and its allies in civil society – e.g. businesses and the Church, keep the formation rooted in the parochial concerns of the community.⁴⁹⁶

Whatever the full explanation as to *why* the Hungarian Democratic Union so quickly established a monopoly of support among the ethnic-Hungarian community in Romania, the results are clear. The politics of ethnicity were radicalised; some political actors in the majority ethnic community responded by setting up movements of their own; the narrative

⁴⁹⁰ The Hungarian Democratic Union so rapidly captured the support of Romania's Hungarian minority that it emerged as the second largest party in the Romanian parliament after the elections of May 1990.

⁴⁹¹ Rogers Brubaker, *Nationalist Politics and Everyday Ethnicity in a Transylvanian Town*, Princeton University Press, 2006.

⁴⁹² Interview with Csaba Sogor, former priest and current Euro MP representing the Hungarian Democratic Union, June 2008, Brussels.

⁴⁹³ Jonathan Stein (ed), *The Politics of National Minority Participation in Post Communist Europe*, East West Institute, New York, page 104.

⁴⁹⁴ One commentator, at least, claims that the platforms are as much vehicles for individual personalities as of ideological currents. Dan Oprescu, *UDMR in 2000*, Sfera Politicii, nr. 79, FSC, Bucharest, 2000, page 9.

⁴⁹⁵ Interview with Csaba Takacs, January 2009, Cluj.

⁴⁹⁶ Dan Oprescu, page 11.

of politics became, if not dominated by, at least suffused with the language of nationalist conflict; and the areas with a predominantly ethnic-Hungarian population were rapidly lost to all the 'Romanian' parties, and they have stayed lost ever since. The Democratic Union's monopoly of voting preferences among the Hungarian community created a barrier to integration on the centre-right: there was no visible gain in votes to be made by the formation (and indeed a risk of votes being lost to breakaway organisations if Democratic Union politicians associated too closely with ethnic Romanian parties; and the option of exit – coalition formation with other parties as happened after 2000 – would be made more problematic.⁴⁹⁷ Nor was there any likely benefit for alternative structures to try to compete for votes within the community – as one respondent in Brubaker's research tellingly remarks:

If this stupid ultranationalist trash would disappear, there would be not much reason for the DAHR [Hungarian Democratic Union] to exist either... Because then you could just join the Peasant Party or the Liberal Party or whatever. But the way it is now the Hungarians... make it out to be our national obligation to join the DAHR.⁴⁹⁸

The Hungarian Democratic Union was fully committed to the 'anti-Iliescu' project. It signed the Timisoara Declaration and the National Convention for the Installation of Democracy agreement and it participated in the Democratic Anti-Totalitarian Forum. It went on to be a founder member of the Democratic Convention. But the radicalism of some ethnic-Hungarian politicians was a regular source of tension within the Democratic Convention throughout the years in opposition, and the 'Romanian' parties showed an ambivalent attitude to the concerns of the Hungarian Democratic Union. National Liberal leader Radu Campeanu objected to its membership of the Convention in the run up to the 1992 election (although he may well have been using this as part of his plan to disengage

⁴⁹⁷ It is worth noting that the monopoly hold over the community's political support was not quite complete. Ethnic-Hungarians have held relatively senior positions in all the major mainstream 'Romanian' parties at various times. There also appears to have been some penetration by the Romanian parties into Hungarian communities. Petru Biturca, for example, claims that the National Peasants gained a number of members in the Hungarian communes of Mures county. But the dominance of the Hungarian Democratic Union lowered exit barriers for these members when the Convention began to lose its grip on power since the formation offered a 'natural' home for them.

⁴⁹⁸ Rogers Brubaker, page 344.

from the Convention).⁴⁹⁹ After the local elections of that year, Ion Ratiu ordered the National Peasants in Cluj to back Gheorghe Funar's Romanian National Unity Party in preference to the National Salvation Front on the county council – a move which showed little sensitivity to the concerns of his ethnic Hungarian alliance partners.⁵⁰⁰ At the 1992 General Election the Democratic Union remained part of the Democratic Convention and backed Emil Constantinescu's candidacy for the presidency but it ran a separate list of candidates for parliament.

Early in 1993 Laszlo Tokes made a series of controversial statements about the treatment of the Hungarian minority in Romania while on a lecture tour of the United States.⁵⁰¹ His comments attracted criticism from government and opposition politicians in Romania and tensions remained high between the Democratic Union and other Convention members throughout the rest of the year.⁵⁰² As Csaba Takacs points out, the wider political environment was heavily charged with inter-ethnic tension – the government was supported by radical nationalist parties which were keen to talk up the threats to Romanian territorial integrity posed by Hungarian recidivism – and he suggests that the Convention responded by developing a more nationalist emphasis in its own narrative.⁵⁰³ In June 1994, the Chamber of Deputies passed an education bill which the Democratic Union opposed because of its impact on minority rights – the only other party to vote against the bill in parliament was the Liberal Party '93. The failure of National Peasant Deputies in particular to support moderating amendments to the law was a severe blow to the Hungarian Democratic Union and their attitude to the Convention.⁵⁰⁴ The formation of a special council of ethnic-Hungarian local government officials led to the Democratic Union being threatened with expulsion from the Convention at the end of 1994 – the issue went to the

⁴⁹⁹ Interview with Csaba Takacs, January 2009, Cluj.

⁵⁰⁰ Ion Ratiu. Funar was an outspoken radical nationalist whose period as mayor of Cluj was marked by a series of anti-Hungarian stunts such as painting all the street bollards and park benches in the colours of the Romanian flag.

⁵⁰¹ Bishop Tokes was probably the highest profile ethnic Hungarian on the Romanian political scene following his leading role in the December 1989 revolution. Threats by the Communist authorities to move him from his Timisoara parish led to violent confrontations with protestors (from all communities) and in turn sparked the nationwide popular uprising against the Ceausescu regime.

⁵⁰² Pavel and Huiu, page 190.

⁵⁰³ Interview with Csaba Takacs, January 2009, Cluj

⁵⁰⁴ Ethnic Hungarian leaders had negotiated an agreement with the Democratic Convention's Steering Committee whereby its deputies would support the amendments but the National Peasant Deputies defied their leadership. Jonathan Stein (ed), page 111.

heart of the dispute over the status of Harghita and Covasna Counties which had overwhelmingly Hungarian populations and which the Democratic Union had been pressing to be given a degree of autonomy from the Romanian state. In February 1995, the Central Bureau of the National Liberal Party declared that the Democratic Union “persists with an attitude of not understanding the character of the Romanian nation and state,” and that made continued collaboration impossible.⁵⁰⁵ Emil Constantinescu issued an ultimatum to the Democratic Union to explicitly recognise the unified national character of the Romanian state and on February 16th it withdrew from the Convention.⁵⁰⁶

The statement announcing the Democratic Union’s withdrawal from the Convention confirmed its continued support for the formation’s basic objectives and the experience of the crisis seemed to lead to a moderation of behaviour on both sides. Despite being outside the formal structures of the Convention, the Democratic Union backed Constantinescu in the 1996 presidential run-off and entered government for the first time as partner of the Convention after the elections.⁵⁰⁷

The Hungarian Democratic Union is widely acknowledged by ministers as a reliable and loyal coalition partner and the Convention-led government took some note-worthy steps in key areas of concern to the Hungarian community.⁵⁰⁸ But one issue - minority language education - remained a source of tension between the Democratic Union and its partners throughout the 1990s. In 1998 the issue threatened to force the formation out of government. The creation of a Hungarian-language university at Cluj had been a long-term aim and the government’s education law stopped short of delivering on this policy – the government’s reforming education minister could only offer Hungarian language classes within a structure where Romanian remained the dominant language.⁵⁰⁹ The debate went

⁵⁰⁵ Newspaper report in *Adevarul* 2 February 1995, quoted in Pavel and Huiu, *op cit*, p. 219.

⁵⁰⁶ Economist Intelligence Unit Country Report for Romania, Quarters 4 of 1994 and 1 of 1995.

⁵⁰⁷ The Hungarian Democratic Union signed a secret ‘protocol’ with the parties of the Democratic Convention on 7th November 1996 – between the first and second ballots of the presidential election. The formations agreed to co-operate in the new parliament with the Hungarian Democratic Union joining the new government. Emil Constantinescu, pp. 253 - 254.

⁵⁰⁸ Leading civil society activist Gabriel Andreescu identifies the normalisation of relations with Hungary as the 1996 – 2000 government’s greatest achievement for example. Interview with Andreescu, Bucharest

⁵⁰⁹ Interview with Andrei Marga, January 2009, Cluj.

on for a number of months and only concluded in October when the Democratic Union's Council of Representatives voted narrowly to remain in the coalition.⁵¹⁰

The coalition was already facing substantial political difficulties by this time but the Democratic Union opted to remain loyal to the government even though it had failed to secure one of its key political objectives. The indication is that the Union was confident that it could achieve other policy objectives by remaining in government. The lower cost option of withdrawing from the Convention was no longer available (since the formation already sat outside the Convention) and the cost of complete withdrawal from the government would have been too high because they would have lost all influence over policy making. Indeed, it is possible to argue that simply by being in government the Democratic Union had secured the key political objective of demonstrating its future coalitionability to other parties, including the Social Democrats. This opened the door to future co-operation with the Social Democrats with the Hungarian Democratic Union secure in the knowledge that they did not risk a major loss of electoral support if such a coalition came about. The same calculation was not made by the other policy-prioritising formations – the civil society groups – following the drawn-out demise of the first Democratic Convention government led by Victor Ciorbea. Rather, their prioritising of policy-based objectives outweighed electoral calculations and led to a cataclysmic eruption within the Convention while in government.

5.6 Coalition of the disgruntled – the dismissal of Victor Ciorbea and the role of the civic society groups

The Convention's election victory in November 1996 was met with a positive international reaction and popular enthusiasm at home. The government's honeymoon period lasted until the late summer of 1997 as economic reforms and negotiations over NATO membership progressed. The coalition government's inherent weakness was rapidly exposed, however, as it embarked on political reforms that had been delayed by the years of Social Democrat rule. The tension arose from conflict between the civil society groups at the core of the Convention who were intent on pursuing their radical political reforms and

⁵¹⁰ The Council voted 59-37 in favour of remaining part of the coalition after reportedly debating the issue for ten hours. UDMR ramane, dar nu se preda!, *Romania Libera*, 5 October 1998, page 3.

the Democrat Party, their coalition partner and a determined defender of its supporters' interests. The attacks on Democrat ministers – and on Traian Basescu in particular – began immediately after the Convention came to power. On 7th December 1996 Ana Blandiana demanded that the Convention respect all of the pledges made in the Contract for Romania – specifically referring to point 15 which stated that membership of the government was incompatible with retaining links to businesses. Democrats Basescu and Adrian Severin were identified as those who should resign their business interests if they were to serve in the government.⁵¹¹ Three days later the press carried stories of how the Transport minister was still living in a villa that had been subject to a successful restitution claim.⁵¹²

The tipping point into crisis was the dismissal of Valerian Stan from his post as head of the government's co-ordination body (effectively he was minister responsible for anti-corruption measures) at the end of August 1997. It was a decision rapidly identified as driven by political expediency, aimed at maintaining Democrat support for the government. Stan had called a press conference at which he had been expected to announce the results of his enquiries into abuses of state-owned properties since 1989. Amid vaguely comic scenes the press conference was cancelled and hastily replaced with an announcement of Stan's departure from the government.⁵¹³ Six months of turmoil within the government followed which eventually resulted in the replacement of Victor Ciorbea as Prime Minister and the reconstitution of the government under the leadership of Radu Vasile.

The Democrat Party was, itself, reacting from a position of weakness. The party faced the prospect of being squeezed from the scene after the 1996 elections as opinion polls registered strong support for the Convention. Iliescu's Social Democrats were weakened by their defeat but they remained clearly the largest party on the left and they began the process of internal reform as they sought rehabilitation. In the short term, the Democrats faced an additional challenge with the setting up of the Alliance for Romania, a centrist break-away from the Social Democrats established in the autumn of 1997 which laid claim to much of the Democrats' political territory without the encumbrance of having to take

⁵¹¹ Conventia trebui sa-si respecte promisiunile facute in campania electorala, *Romania Libera*, 7th December 1996, page 3.

⁵¹² Basescule, vila inapoi! *Romania Libera*, 10th December 1996, page 1.

⁵¹³ *Romania Libera*, *Din ratiune politice, coruptii vor ramane nepedepsiti?* 29/8/97 page 1.

responsibility for unpopular government decisions.⁵¹⁴ The Democrats also clearly feared the prospect of early parliamentary elections which many in the Convention had been proposing for months in order to capitalise on the formation's popular support.⁵¹⁵ The Democrat Party responded by making use of their political assets - party discipline, political experience and a group of influential supporter/clients.

Democrat transport minister, Traian Basescu, gave an interview to the *Evenimentul Zilei* newspaper which was published on 27th December 1997. In it, Basescu launched:

...a violent attack against the Prime Minister who, he says, chairs long inefficient government meetings, is incapable of making decisions, as well as against the National Peasant Party – an obsolete party in the Romanian political environment, he says. Hence reform stagnation is *their* [the National Peasants'] fault.⁵¹⁶

On 29th December, Ciorbea responded to the challenge to his authority by demanding a retraction or Basescu's resignation. Basescu duly resigned from the government but in January the Democrat Party proposed that he should be reinstated.⁵¹⁷ A few days later the Democrats' Permanent National Bureau (BPN) met and expressed its dissatisfaction with the record of the government in its first year. The BPN statement had a distinctly leftist tone. It blamed a lack of progress towards reform on the prioritising of a 'populist' campaign for entry into NATO and divisive obsessions with restitution of property, nostalgia for the Monarchy and the opening of Securitate files. It reiterated themes from the Union of Social Democrats' manifesto of 1996 calling for the government to prioritise measures to tackle poverty and to create opportunities for young people by generating economic growth, with the social costs of restructuring to be paid for via progressive

⁵¹⁴ The Alliance for Romania was formed on 4 September 1997. It stressed that 80% of its members had never previously been involved in politics (thereby distancing itself from Iliescu's party) and that most of its members were intellectuals or young people. Economist Intelligence Unit Country Report for Romania, Quarter 4 1997, page 11.

⁵¹⁵ In fact Zoe Petre claims that early elections were never seriously considered by President Constantinescu, despite the strong pressure from some in the Convention, because of the constitutional difficulties involved in triggering the elections. She estimates that the process could have taken up to three months and the Democrats could have reacted by deserting the government in favour of a coalition with the Social Democrats – the crucial political card that allowed the Democrats so much apparent control over the government's direction. Interview with Zoe Petre, February 2009, Bucharest.

⁵¹⁶ Emil Constantinescu, page 269.

⁵¹⁷ Romania Libera, *PD il propune Basescu in loc lui Basescu*, 8/1/98 page 3.

taxation.⁵¹⁸ The Democrat Party subsequently withdrew all of its ministers from the government and in the weeks that followed it became clear that Prime Minister Victor Ciorbea was losing the support of the National Liberals and the National Peasants. Even Civic Alliance leaders eventually deserted Ciorbea's corner, proposing, according to Constantinescu, Andrei Marga in his place.⁵¹⁹ On March 22nd, the 'Brasov Group' within the National Peasant Party made its public move in favour of party General Secretary, Radu Vasile.⁵²⁰ During the following week the National Liberals delivered the *coup de grace* when Valeriu Stoica publicly demanded a change of prime minister.⁵²¹ After National Liberal ministers backed their party leader when Ciorbea asked for his resignation, the National Peasants responded by authorising their party leadership to approve Ciorbea's dismissal.⁵²² On March 30th Ciorbea's resignation was announced and the Convention's unity and self-confidence seemed to be shattered for good.⁵²³

The impact of the crisis was most pronounced on the Civic Alliance and the Alliance's response highlights the organisational strains created by the 'half-way-house' status of the civic society groups within the Convention – a core member of the Convention but, because of its non-party status, effectively excluded from the day-to-day operation of the government.⁵²⁴ The importance of the civic society groups to the Convention is widely accepted by commentators. The biggest group - Civic Alliance – saw its role as providing civic education, preparing people for democracy and explaining their rights, engaging in 'civic militancy'.⁵²⁵ According to Valerian Stan the Alliance consciously modelled itself on the Czech Civic Forum. Few Alliance members were also members of the political parties. Organisationally it had a wide reach and tried to fashion a new organisational structure to match that ambition. One of the Alliance's founders, Iulian Cornateanu (the first of the hunger strikers from the University Square protests in 1990 and a vice president

⁵¹⁸ Partidul Democrat – ziua cea mai lunga, *Romania Libera*, 15 January 1998, page 2.

⁵¹⁹ Emil Constantinescu, page 281.

⁵²⁰ Un sindrom al luptei pentru putere din PNTCD, *Romania Libera*, 27th March 1998, page 3.

⁵²¹ Sedinta CDR se cauta solutii pentru iesirea din criza, *Romania Libera*, 28 March 1998, page 3.

⁵²² Emil Constantinescu, page 285.

⁵²³ Victor Ciorbea a demisionat, *Romania Libera*, 31 March, 1998, page 1.

⁵²⁴ It is interesting to note that the civil society members of the Democratic Convention were not invited to sign the protocol between the Hungarian Democratic Union and the Convention that decided the shape of the new government in November 1996 (referred to above). Even at this early stage, political decisions had clearly passed into the realm of the parties only.

⁵²⁵ Interview with Valerian Stan, 29 January 2009, Bucharest.

of the Independent Group for Democracy) set out the organisational approach of the Alliance in January 1991 and it bears reproducing in detail:

The Alliance is not the kind of organisation whose structure can be reduced to a standard diagram. Because of its multiple functions and its involvement in many political, economic, social and cultural areas, the structure of the Alliance had to be tailored to both current realities and to hammering out a long term strategy. Its national leadership is exercised by a Steering Council made up of 27 members elected at the national conference, who are joined by representatives of county branches. Activities are carried out within three departments: Operations Sections; a Civic Academy; and the Citizens' Department. The Operations Sections deal with technical matters such as personnel, bookkeeping, administration, mass media etc. They are also in charge of establishing regional branches and economic sections. The Civic Academy incorporates commissions of experts in charge of hammering out Civic Alliance programmes (economic, legal, environmental, social, cultural etc). Similarly the Academy organises activities to spread historical truth and the concepts of democracy and civil liberty. Finally the Citizens' Department ensures links between the Alliance and the people. We plan to establish offices which will examine abuses, something that is extremely important, especially in small towns and villages, where life continues to be managed by the same local henchmen. We also plan to take public opinion polls and to offer legal or social assistance.⁵²⁶

The anti-party (or at least party-sceptic) themes that characterise the discourse of the civil society groups are derived from their role in the overthrow of the Ceausescu regime – opposed to both the Communist Party and the apparatchiks of the National Salvation Front which succeeded it. While the groups saw themselves in a similar role to student and intellectual-led opposition movements in other Central and Eastern European states, they lacked the political capital and leadership of the Czech Civic Forum or the Hungarian opposition groups. Some opted for non-party opposition in response to the victory of the National Salvation Front with the Group for Social Dialogue and others promoting a human rights agenda. Others pursued more direct opposition via membership of the Civic Alliance

⁵²⁶ Interviu cu domnii Gabriel Andreescu si Iulian Cornateanu, *Romania Libera*, 17 January 1991, page 5.

and affiliation to the Democratic Convention (some also joined the political parties associated with the Convention).⁵²⁷

The Civic Alliance frequently acted as broker between the parties that made up the Convention, as mentioned above, and it was able to promote Emil Constantinescu as a compromise candidate for the presidency between the potentially divisive candidacies of Ion Ratiu, Radu Campeanu and Nicolae Manolescu. As a return on its political capital the Civic Alliance sought radical political reforms – it was the failure of the government to deliver them which led directly to its rapid loss of faith in the Convention after the dismissal of first Valerian Stan and then Victor Ciorbea in the face of Democrat pressure.⁵²⁸

Widespread disquiet was expressed at the National Council of the Civic Alliance in November 1997 with some calls for the Alliance to withdraw from the Convention. According to speakers, efforts to re-launch the organisational elements of the Convention had failed and as a result the Civic Alliance had been excluded from all the major government decisions.⁵²⁹ In December the Civic Alliance published its conditions for remaining part of the Democratic Convention. The demands all focused on re-activating the organisational structures of the Convention to involve the civil society groups in decision making:

1. Reorganising and putting into a functioning state the local and central structures of the Democratic Convention
2. Reactivating the research departments and communication functions of the Convention

⁵²⁷ Interviews with Valerian Stan, Gabriel Andreescu, Renate Weber and Zoe Petre.

⁵²⁸ As early as January 1997, the Civic Alliance and the Association of Former Political Prisoners had been identified as a source of centrifugal pressures within the Convention, see: CDR, identitatea politice si iluziile solidaritati, *Romania Libera*, 28 January 1997, page 3. The author blames this on the Convention's lack of a 'rigorous, delimited political platform,' emphasising the significance of policy demands to the civil society groups.

⁵²⁹ Partidele din CDR au rupt relatiile de fond cu formatiunile civice, *Romania Libera*, 3 November 1997 page 3.

3. Participation of civil society formations in decision making at the local and central level...⁵³⁰

Following the Convention's National Council discussion of the Civic Alliance motion, the Alliance published a declaration on the state of the Convention which emphasised its continued unhappiness.⁵³¹ The Alliance's position of weakness after the election victory is illustrated by the declaration being published as a reaction to the signing of a protocol between the parties only within the government (*including* the Democrat Party but not the civil society groups) illustrating the Alliance's outsider role. As pressure on Ciorbea's position grew, the Civic Alliance publicly backed the Prime Minister as the best option for resolving the political crisis (and presumably the option least likely to the further marginalisation of the Alliance).⁵³² Following his dismissal, the Alliance withdrew from the Convention claiming that it had paid the ultimate price for backing Ciorbea to the end and that the Convention had effectively ceased to exist.⁵³³

The dismissal of Ciorbea as Prime Minister did not end the political crisis – instead the turmoil intensified over the summer as each of the parties in the government assessed the impact of the change on their own position and how to respond to it. Within the National Peasant Party criticism of the party's leadership was made public by the 'Brasov Group'. At the party's summer school, Ciorbea laid the blame for the government crisis at the door of the Democrats and admitted that the dismissal of Valerian Stan – at the insistence of the Democrats – was a major mistake. The former Prime Minister called for a re-launch of the Convention (with the readmission of the Civic Alliance) but also clearly saw the National Peasant Party as retaining a leading role in the formation and acting as the driving force for reform – the possibility that this very formulation had been a major contributor to the break-up of the government does not appear to have been entertained.⁵³⁴ Ciorbea and his supporters eventually left the National Peasants but the leading role in the government that was retained by the party meant that barriers to exit were relatively high. The National

⁵³⁰ Civic Alliance, *Condițiile Rămănerii Alianței Civice În Convenția Democrată*, Bucharest, 12 December 1997. www.aliantacivica.ro/documente, accessed 17 May 2008.

⁵³¹ Declarația Alianței Civice despre starea Coaliției, *Romania Libera*, 10 February, 1998, page 3.

⁵³² AC sprijina în continuare guvernul și pe primul ministru Victor Ciorbea, *Romania Libera*, 17 March 1998 page 3.

⁵³³ Un ultim semnal de alarmă, *Romania Libera*, 8 April 1998 page 3.

⁵³⁴ PNT-CD la răsruce, *Romania Libera*, 8 June 1998, page 3.

Liberals' agitation for an enlarged role in the Convention grew increasingly vocal as the crisis went on and ultimately fed into the end-game of the Convention discussed below. Ultimately, though, the Civic Alliance was the only major departure from the formation at this stage because the benefit it sought was policy change not office and it did not feel those changes were being delivered.⁵³⁵

The dismissal of the Ciorbea government is often told as a story of the weakness of the National Peasants: the problems of running a coalition of coalitions; the factionalism it exposed within the party; the party's lack of experience in government; and the failings of individual leaders, particularly party president Ion Diaconescu. In Ciorbea's own view, the government's reform programme was 'confiscated' by the Democrats and the National Peasant's participation in government became merely 'decorative'.⁵³⁶ But more telling is the light it casts on the role played by the Civic Alliance. According to Fati, the weakness of the National Peasants derived from internal divisions but the damaging consequence for the Convention was the creation of the impression that control had been ceded to the former Frontists in the Democrat Party which in turn damaged the relationship with the Civic Alliance.⁵³⁷ But could the Alliance ever have been reconciled to the realities of governing? Government minister Virgil Petrescu points to the problematic role of NGOs within the Convention:

The Convention was a broad *movement* against Iliescu. But parties and NGOs couldn't *govern* together. The NGOs were angry at their exclusion after 1996.⁵³⁸

The degree of animosity created by the influential NGOs is apparent in the comments of former finance minister Daniel Daianu:

[Civil society groups] would bicker from the side but wanted to run the government at the same time. They needed to get into politics but they wanted to sit on the sidelines. Intellectuals wanting to act as referees on political life.⁵³⁹

⁵³⁵ The Alternative Romania Party left the Convention in October 1998 citing a failure of the government to follow the provisions of the party's 'Manifesto of the Right'. The media reported that a number of its parliamentarians responded by quitting to join parties that remained within the government. *Parlamentarii incep sa paraseasca PAR, Romania Libera*, 29 October 1998 page 1.

⁵³⁶ Quoted by Sabina Fati in *CDR – o alianta depasita*, Sfera Politicii nr. 79, FSC, Bucharest, 2000, page 20.

⁵³⁷ Sabina Fati, page 20.

⁵³⁸ Interview with Virgil Petrescu, education minister 1996-98.

This sense of frustration can be understood given the extent to which the civic society groups were driven by policy objectives rather than party-based concerns – a point made by Renate Weber who moved from civil society campaigning into party politics.⁵⁴⁰ The views of Gabriel Andreescu, a leading Human Rights campaigner (and member of the National Salvation Front Council in December 1989), back up this interpretation. He makes the case for a positive view of the 1996-2000 government which is entirely policy based: the reduction of ethnic tensions by the inclusion of the Hungarian Democratic Union in government; the resolution of disputes with neighbouring countries; the stabilising of the economy; privatisation and the growth of inward economic investment.⁵⁴¹ The party game was of secondary importance.

The dismissal of Stan and then Ciorbea marked an end to innocence for the Democratic Convention. It exposed the different priorities of the member organisations and the inherent difficulties of involving non-party groups in the process of government. Public support for the government began to decline which meant it carried forward less political capital into the second half of its term in office where it faced the severe challenges associated with implementing its reform programme. Constantinescu points to a poll published in March showing a 14 percentage point drop in support for the Convention since the beginning of the year (and a 10% increase for the Democrats).⁵⁴² Support for the Convention had rallied somewhat by June but the most damaging long term effect was a dramatic loss of public confidence in the direction that the government was taking the country. Fifty two per cent of respondents to the June CURS poll felt that the country was going in the wrong direction, with just 25% saying it was going in the right direction. The same poll showed that 59% of people felt that privatisation needed to be accelerated (against 7% who felt it should be slowed down and 10% saying it should be maintained at its current speed), indicating that, at that stage at least, a large part of the electorate had not

⁵³⁹ Interview with Daniel Daianu.

⁵⁴⁰ Interview with Renate Weber, Brussels, May 2008. Weber was a leading human rights activist who went on to be a Member of the European Parliament representing the National Liberal Party.

⁵⁴¹ Interview with Gabriel Andreescu.

⁵⁴² Emil Constantinescu, page 281. Support for the Democratic Convention fell from 42% in January to 28% in March, with the Democrat Party rising from 8% to 18%.

lost faith in the reform programme, just in the government's ability to deliver it.⁵⁴³ While Valerian Stan does not claim his dismissal ended the Convention, he sees it as effectively the beginning of the end:

It is a subjective view. My dismissal was a bad sign for the fight against corruption. My department did nothing after I left. The Civic Alliance leadership protested because they felt the government moderated its views on corruption after coming to office. The public saw this and the government's credibility was affected. It wasn't my leaving that led to lots of other people deserting but it was the beginning of the decline.⁵⁴⁴

5.7 End game – the break-up of the Convention

The story of the Democratic Convention's collapse from government to extra-parliamentary formation is, in contrast to the idealistic disillusionment of the Civic Alliance's rupture with the Convention, entirely one of party calculation and internal division between the two largest parties in the formation. It illustrates the weaknesses inherent in partnership structures – co-operation between two parties which held similar levels of political capital was constantly disrupted by calculations of whether greater gains could be made outside of the Convention. The weakness of the Convention was exacerbated by the fact that one partner – the National Peasant Party – held a dominant position within the organisation that was out of line with its real strength in relation to the National Liberals. The National Peasants did not have the political capital to defeat or absorb the National Liberals but they were unwilling to give up their position of leadership within the Convention. The leaders of the National Liberals responded by consciously forging institutionalised loyalty to their own party as distinct from the Convention.⁵⁴⁵

⁵⁴³ Intarzierea privatizarii indreapta tara spre o directia gresita, *Romania Libera*, 26 June 1998, page 1. The CURS poll showed voting intentions for the parliamentary elections as: Democratic Convention 34%, Social Democrats 22%, Greater Romania Party 14%, Democrat Party 13%, Alliance for Romania 7%, Hungarian Democratic Union 6% and others 4%.

⁵⁴⁴ Interview with Valerian Stan.

⁵⁴⁵ Valeriu Stoica acknowledges the effort to reorganise the National Liberals between 1997 and 2000 in order to create a stable structure, with an 'institutional configuration' which permitted the affirmation of a clear political position. Valeriu Stoica, *Provocari*.

As evidence showed popular support for the Convention waning, and as the election drew nearer, the rationale for exit was strengthened. A CURS opinion poll in October 1999 showed the Democratic Convention backed by just 17% of voters and Emil Constantinescu's support at the same low level.⁵⁴⁶ Faced with such levels of unpopularity just a year before the General Election, Convention leaders made what amounted to their last throw of the dice with the removal of Radu Vasile as Prime Minister. Vasile's premiership had failed to end the parliamentary blockage that was holding up the Convention's legislative programme and, rather than improving relations within the coalition, his leadership was causing them to worsen.⁵⁴⁷ The first concern of National Peasant leader Ion Diaconescu's was heading off the potential for a split in his own party and the perceived threat (from Vasile) to his own position as party president. After receiving representations from a delegation of National Peasant Deputies, Diaconescu decided to initiate negotiations over the recasting of the government as an essential step towards reviving the Democratic Convention.⁵⁴⁸

The coalition leaders accepted the nomination of National Bank chief Mugur Isarescu as premier and after a protracted struggle Vasile finally accepted his removal from office in December 1999. That Isarescu was a non-party technocrat is a further indication of the erosion of National Peasant authority within the Convention and the coalition (and equally the lack of any dominant alternative). Isarescu's case appears to have been promoted by President Constantinescu, whose connections to any political party had always been tenuous.⁵⁴⁹ Democrat leader Petre Roman vetoed the National Peasant candidates who were proposed and the choice that appears to have emerged was between former Prime Minister Theodor Stolojan and Isarescu.⁵⁵⁰ Stolojan was ruled out by Diaconescu because of his association with the National Salvation Front (Stolojan had led an Front dominated interim government between the fall of Petre Roman in 1991 and the elections of 1992) which left Isarescu as the only viable option for the National Peasants. Isarescu was

⁵⁴⁶ Quoted in Pavel and Huiu, page 569. MMT polls gave the Convention 22% support in May 1999, falling to just 15% in May 2000.

⁵⁴⁷ Vasile's leadership style and his close relations with the Democrat Party and opposition figures undermined his relations with the National Peasant Party in particular. Tom Gallagher, *Theft*, pp 226-229.

⁵⁴⁸ Ion Diaconescu, *Revolutie*, pp 237-250.

⁵⁴⁹ Interview with Zoe Petre.

⁵⁵⁰ Ion Diaconescu, *Revolutie*, page 244.

acceptable to the National Liberals because he accepted the party's economic programme (and presumably also because he was not a National Peasant Party member).⁵⁵¹

At the end of 1999, National Liberal leader Valeriu Stoica had approached Stolojan to recruit him to the Liberal leadership. Stoica states that both men were of the opinion that the 2000 election was lost to the Social Democrats unless the centre-right in its broadest sense could be brought together in a more effective formation than the Convention.⁵⁵² The National Liberals thus sought to exploit the weakened position of the National Peasants by proposing a realignment of power within the Convention, giving their party an enhanced position. The party leadership pursued a parallel strategy of exploring exit strategies based either on building new alliances or on strengthening their own political assets to run a campaign independent of the Convention.

In January, the National Liberals announced that they would run separately from the Democratic Convention in the local elections, but the party signed an agreement with the National Peasants that they would support each other's mayoral candidates in any run-off ballots.⁵⁵³ The Civic Alliance initiated and mediated negotiations between the centre right parties aimed at re-establishing the Democratic Convention, stressing that it did so to ensure the progress of reform and that it was not seeking candidate places for its own organisation.⁵⁵⁴ Diaconescu, though, appeared to publicly write off the chances of reviving the Convention – even within his own very limited definition of its scope.⁵⁵⁵

The coalition government experienced a turbulent spring with the Democrats again at the centre of the storm. This time, though, the Democrats were themselves struggling to stay afloat. Roman was re-elected leader at the party congress in January but the party was destabilised by offers of a coalition agreement from the Social Democrats and the loss of

⁵⁵¹ Valeriu Stoica, *Unificarea*, page 25.

⁵⁵² Valeriu Stoica, *Unificarea*, page 23.

⁵⁵³ Romania Libera, *Impreuna dar separate!*, 5 January 2000, page 3.

⁵⁵⁴ Romania Libera, *PNT-CD, PNL, UFD si ANCD au convenit sa se solidarizeze impotriva 'stangii antireformatoare'*, 11 January 2000, page 3 and *Romania Libera* 2000, *Oferta si conditiile Aliantei Civice pentru alegerile din anul 2000*, 4 March 2000, page 3.

⁵⁵⁵ Diaconescu claimed that the National Peasants remained committed to a formation composed of parties and representatives of civil society running a single list of candidates for *all* elections but that the CDR had lost its purpose.

key members – including one serving minister, Victor Babiuc, to the National Liberals which led to renewed threats from the Democrats to withdraw from the government.⁵⁵⁶

In the local elections, the Convention won 7.5% of the vote and the National Liberals, 7.0%. Of potential competitors and collaborators on the centre and centre-right, only the Democrats exceeded even these meagre tallies, leaving Iliescu's Social Democrats as the clear winners.⁵⁵⁷

In the wake of the June local elections, Stoica identified his main objective as being the establishment of a different type of alliance with a single presidential candidate, his second objective being simply how not to lose the party's place in parliament.⁵⁵⁸ Asked later whether the Democratic Convention could have been the basis for the right to recover its equilibrium, Stoica replied that it was not only a matter of the political vehicle but the fuel that went into it and the way it worked.⁵⁵⁹ He sought an alliance with the Alliance for Romania but this proved a difficult task: many of his colleagues were resistant to co-operation with the left and the Alliance for Romania demanded more from the deal than its political capital could justify.⁵⁶⁰ The National Liberals settled on the option of running their campaign independent of the Convention and banking on the standing of Stolojan as their standard bearer to maximise their support.

The National Peasants continued through the early part of the summer to seek the reconstruction of the Democratic Convention but the National Liberals did not appear receptive to the move and in August two senior members left the party to re-align with the Convention.⁵⁶¹ In September, the creation of a new Democratic Convention formation built around the National Peasant Party was announced. Only one senior figure in the Convention – education minister Andrei Marga – suggested that an alternative route out of

⁵⁵⁶ Partidul Democrat a creat o criza parlamentara, *Romania Libera*, 23 February 2000, page 3.

⁵⁵⁷ Share of vote for County Councils (Consiliile Judetene). The PD polled 9.9%, the ApR 7.4% and Victor Ciorbea's ANCD just 1.3%. The Social Democrats won 27.4% of the vote and the Greater Romania Party gave no clue to its dramatic success a few months later by securing 6.6%. Stan Stoica, *Dupa '89*, page 246.

⁵⁵⁸ Stoica, *Provocare*, page 152.

⁵⁵⁹ Stoica, *Provocare*, page 153.

⁵⁶⁰ Revolta in PNL, *Romania Libera*, 3 July 2000, page 3. Teodor Melescanu, leader of the Alliance for Romania, had polled strongly until he became linked to the Costea scandal and the party's poll rating had fallen by more than half to 6% in August 2000. Gallagher, *Theft*, page 242.

⁵⁶¹ Ministrul Decebal Traian Remes si senatorul Dan Amedeu Lazarescu au parasit PNL, *Romania Libera*, 24 August 2000, page 1.

the impasse between the National Liberals and the National Peasants might be the creation of a new reform party.⁵⁶² His proposal did not come to fruition.

President Constantinescu himself ultimately opted for exit, stunning the Romanian political class by announcing in mid July that he would not seek re-election. The way was open for Isarescu to run for the presidency but the polls showed him trailing Stolojan. Late efforts were made to re-establish co-operation between the National Liberals and the National Peasants behind a Stolojan (for president) – Isarescu (for prime minister) ticket but Diaconescu appears to have decided that it was too late to forge a new alliance.⁵⁶³

Table 18: Votes cast in the presidential election, November/December 2000⁵⁶⁴

	Round I		Round II	
	Votes	%	Votes	%
Ion Iliescu	4 076 273	36.4	6 696 623	66.8
Corneliu Vadim Tudor	3 178 293	28.3	3 324 247	33.2
Theodor Stolojan	1 321 420	11.8		
Mugur Isarescu	1 069 463	9.5		
Gyorgy Frunda	696 989	6.2		
Petre Roman	334 852	3.0		
Others	535 684	4.8		

Table 19: Result of the parliamentary election, November 2000⁵⁶⁵

	Vote*	%*	Deputies elected	Senators elected
Social Democrats	3 968 464	36.6	155	65
Greater Romania Party	2 112 027	19.5	84	37
Democrat Party	762 365	7.0	31	13
National Liberal Party	747 263	6.9	30	13
Hungarian Democratic Union	736 863	6.8	27	12
Democratic Convention 2000	546 135	5.0	0	0
Alliance for Romania	441 228	4.1	0	0
Others	2 438 892	19.9	18**	0

* Chamber of Deputies. ** Representing the ethnic minorities

⁵⁶² Andrei Marga, *Interviuri, speranta si ratiunii*, Fundatia Pentru Studii Europene, Cluj, 2006, pp. 213 – 215 reproduces Marga's declaration, published in *Evenimentul Zilei* on 18 July 2000.

⁵⁶³ Gallagher, *Theft*, page 242.

⁵⁶⁴ Stan Stoica, *Dupa* '89, pp. 241 – 242.

⁵⁶⁵ Stan Stoica, *Dupa* '89, pp. 231 – 234.

Ultimately, if success for the Convention was to be achieved either by the fusion of liberal and conservative interests, or by the absorption of one into the other, the member organisations proved too weak to do either. Instead, the Convention was undone by deep-seated differences over strategic choices which gave rise to bitter animosity. National Peasant Secretary General Remus Opris seemed to reveal more than merely his party's election theme when asked to assess the attitude of the National Liberals. The National Peasants had kept liberalism alive in the face of the National Liberals' self-destructive tendencies and their flirtations with the left and were being repaid with further duplicity:

...it is the second time, by accepting the traditional National Liberals within the Convention, [that the] National Peasant Party has contributed to the rehabilitation of Romanian liberalism. After the political adventures initiated by Radu Campeanu which led the National Liberal Party to serve the interests of President Ion Iliescu and Premier Teodor Stolojan, the liberal movement could be found inside the Democratic Convention between 1992 and 1996, given the necessary support of Corneliu Coposu and our party to avoid the shattering of the liberals... It seems that history is repeating.⁵⁶⁶

But it was the National Peasants who were on the verge of shattering. The Convention 2000 election campaign focused on attacking their former allies the National Liberals while the rise of the Greater Romania Party went unnoticed. By absenting themselves from the Convention, the National Liberals benefited directly from the lower electoral threshold applying to single parties than for electoral alliances and the 1.3 million votes won by Stolojan in the presidential poll may also have helped to lift the National Liberal tally. The National Peasants suffered a catastrophic defeat, winning just 5% of the vote which was not enough to qualify for representation in parliament.⁵⁶⁷ While the Convention broke up after the elections and the National Peasants declined to the political fringe, the liberals used

⁵⁶⁶ CDR2000 si Mugur Isarescu, impreuna pe drumul cel bun al Romaniei europene, *Romania Libera*, 14 October 2000, page 2.

⁵⁶⁷ In the first round of the presidential ballot, Stolojan finished third behind Iliescu and Vadim Tudor. He polled 11.8% of the vote while Isarescu, running as an independent with Democratic Convention 2000 support won 9.5%. In the parliamentary elections, the National Liberals won 6.9% and the Convention 2000, 5.0%. The threshold faced by the National Liberals as a single party was 5.0% while it was 8% for the Convention 2000 electoral alliance. Stan Stoica, *Dupa* '89, pp. 231-241.

their parliamentary base as a starting point to reconstruct a centrist alternative to the Social Democrats, this time in alliance with the Democrat Party.

5.8 Conclusion

Emil Constantinescu challenges the notion that the Democratic Convention failed on the grounds that such analysis fails to appreciate the nature of the formation. It was an electoral alliance which set itself a series of clear goals: winning local elections in Bucharest and other large cities in 1991; obtaining a high vote share in the 1992 elections; winning the local and national elections of 1996. From this perspective, all of the Convention's objectives were achieved.⁵⁶⁸ Yet it cannot be argued by extension that a further objective of the Convention was to collapse under the pressure of governing to such an extent that it failed to win parliamentary representation in the 2000 elections and disappeared from Romanian politics thereafter. It is true that few had the clear aim of crafting a single centre-right party from among the Convention's members at any point in its history. Apart from the anguished response of the Civic Alliance to organisational failure in 1998, there does not even appear to have been much discussion of the best organisational structure for the Convention. From the perspective of the centre right the costs of the 2000 election defeat were considerable: the loss of personnel; the loss of residual electoral loyalty; the need for any successor formation to re-create an organisational presence, particularly in areas where the National Peasant Party had been strong; the potential damage to centre-right policy objectives both from the loss of the National Peasant Party voice and the installation of a Social Democrat government. In this context the inability of the Convention to sustain itself as a long-term vehicle for centre-right politics must be seen in terms of organisational failure.

The break-up of the Democratic Convention is frequently blamed on the strains of running a diverse government coalition but this does not seem to offer an adequate explanation. Other parties survive the experience of running broad coalitions, even in the new democracies of Central and Eastern Europe – including notably the Romanian Social Democrats of course who led a four-way coalition with hard-line leftists and ultra nationalists from 1992 to 1996 and then governed at the head of an entirely different

⁵⁶⁸ Constantinescu, pp. 250 – 251.

constellation from 2000 to 2004. It seems logical to suggest that the fusion of the member organisations of the Convention into a single party would have raised exit barriers but this was barely even contemplated before the electoral catastrophe of 2000. The common explanation for this among political actors is the ideological diversity within the Convention. Yet this too seems a highly contestable explanation since successful centre-right parties across Europe (including examples such as Fidesz in Hungary and the Czech Civic Democrats) have succeeded precisely because they have reconciled diverse ideological positions from nationalism to Christian democracy and neo-liberalism to construct a cohesive centrist platform with a broad electoral base.

The organisational factors that lay beneath the personal and political differences that plagued the Convention appear from the evidence here to relate to the different incentive structures facing each of the key member organisations. The National Peasants were motivated to remain within the Convention framework because their leading position within the organisation gave them the largest share of the rewards. At the same time their vote-maximising objectives combined with experience of heavy electoral defeat when running outside the Convention leading them to conclude that the Convention was the best option for achieving their goal of broadening their electoral support. The smaller civic society groups remained loyal to the Democratic Convention. There was an extensive cross-over of personnel with the National Peasant Party which meant there was also cross-over of incentives and rewards but the formations themselves had lost considerable influence by the end of the 1990s and presumably they calculated that there was little further to gain from sustaining a reduced Convention through what seemed an inevitable spell in opposition.

The Hungarian Democratic Union appeared to have little to gain in electoral terms from affiliation to the Convention. It left the Convention in 1995 and never ran a fully integrated slate of candidates but this mutually beneficial accommodation with the formation helps to explain its continued loyalty to the Convention-led government throughout the 1996-2000 period. Helping to ensure the defeat of the Social Democrats was the principal motivation for Democratic Union membership of the Convention initially. Thereafter the Democratic Union moderated its policy demands over time which meant it was content to stay within

the Convention-led government as long as it was best placed to deliver those policy demands. Towards the end of the 1990s with the repositioning of the Social Democrats and the obvious electoral decline of the Convention, the motivation for remaining attached to the Convention lessened considerably and as a result the Democratic Union eventually abandoned its former coalition partners entirely to run separately in the 2000 elections – including, for the first time, running its own presidential candidate.

In government the Civic Alliance became a focus for dissent. Its determination to stand apart from the government combined with its high expectations to create intense pressures. Valerian Stan gave a foretaste of these pressures in an interview he gave in February 1996:

No one [in the Civic Alliance] takes a salary. What is more, and this is generally understood, our people do not want recompense for what they do. They do not desire places in parliament or in ministries if the Convention forms a government. Material losses are, in the main part, compensated for by the altruism of Civic Alliance members.⁵⁶⁹

Armed with this sense of moral superiority, it is hardly surprising that the Civic Alliance resented the realities of coalition politics.

Combating corruption became a critical political litmus test for the Convention in government. Public confidence in the government's willingness to deal with the issue was rocked early by the Valerian Stan affair but the government was not able to counter the image of failure thanks to its own actions (or lack of them). Convictions for corruption fell steadily through the government's term from 636 in 1997 to 298 in the year 2000.⁵⁷⁰ A survey carried out in the spring of 2000 found that two thirds of respondents (and 70% of businesses) felt that all or almost all public officials were corrupt.⁵⁷¹

The Ciorbea government began by setting out its programme for immediate action on a broad front. The stabilisation programme included 28 pledges and proposals for 26 legislative actions. Among these was just a single pledge relating directly to tackling

⁵⁶⁹ Interviu cu dl. Valerian Stan, presedintele Aliantei Civice, *Romania Libera*, 23 February 1996, page 3.

⁵⁷⁰ Romanian government statistics quoted in Open Society Institute, *Monitoring the EU accession process: Corruption and Anti-corruption policy*, Budapest, 2002, page 457.

⁵⁷¹ World Bank survey quoted in Open Society Institute, page 459.

corruption (to set up a government anti-corruption department) and four proposed bills to reform local government administration. No measures were included that would directly address either the actions of the former Communist regime or the continued involvement of its agents in administration or public life.⁵⁷² Perhaps the primacy given to economic issues in its six month stabilisation plan contributed to unease among its ideologically committed supporters who wanted to see early action on lustration measures.

Sponsor organisations are an established feature of parties in European liberal democracies but the bonds holding the Civic Alliance to the Democratic Convention were particularly weak. Their political objectives were entirely policy driven and even the delivery of their policy prospectus held few direct personal or group benefits for the Civic Alliance members. The Civic Alliance sat outside government structures and as a result saw its influence *reduce* once the Convention gained power. The exigencies of office holding meant that the 1996-2000 government was unable to deliver the radical policy demands of the Alliance while the Civic Alliance leadership itself was not subjected to the same pressures which might have mitigated their demands.

The National Liberals saw themselves as at least the equals of the National Peasants after their re-formation but the decision not to join the Democratic Convention for the 1992 election meant that the party was always the junior partner within the Convention structure. Joining the Convention for the 1996 elections was entirely rational given the failure of 1992 and was facilitated by the continued presence of fragments of the liberal family within the Convention throughout its existence. The National Peasants' hold on the Convention weakened after the fall of the Ciorbea government and at the same time the National Liberals had strengthened their organisation via a series of mergers. Thus it was equally rational for the party to seek a realignment of power within the Convention as the price for its continued membership. Failure to achieve a satisfactory outcome left the National Liberals to take a hugely risky decision which paid off (just) with its survival as a parliamentary force after the 2000 elections. The National Liberals' decisions about membership therefore appear to have been driven entirely by calculations of electoral cost

⁵⁷² Masuri prioritare pentru primele sase luni de guvernare, *Romania Libera*, 10th December 1996, page 2.

and reward (and the consequences for access to the benefits of office holding) rather than by ideology.

The motivation for the creation of a more tight-knit organisation – even going as far as the creation of a single party – was absent from the thinking of almost all the constituent parts of the Convention. The Civic Alliance wished to maintain its distinct identity outside of the party system since this had brought it substantial influence before the Convention won power. The National Peasants risked losing its leading role within the organisation and even the leaders of the National Liberals benefited from having a defined constituency within the organisation which might be lost in a merger. The Democratic Union had won monopoly control of its electoral constituency and would risk losing that if its distinctive ethnic identity was lost – as the Social Democrats moved back into the orbit of acceptable coalition partners it also would risk losing the insurance policy of flexibility over coalition choices.

There was also little effort made to establish a new centre-right vehicle outside the Convention as it declined. Ciorbea's National Christian Democratic Alliance was a small party with a narrow base which re-entered the Convention in time for the 2000 elections and the same is true of the Alternative Romania Party/Union of Right Forces. Some in the Convention no doubt took the fatalistic view that there was nothing more that could be done to improve the situation – as Brian Barry points out in his critique of *Exit, Voice and Loyalty*, 'deteriorating quality need not produce a belief that decline can be reversed, or perhaps even arrested'.⁵⁷³ So, with the costs of entry being lower for established formations it is unsurprising that many actors chose the option of reverting to running as separate parties once it became clear that the Convention could not be revived. And with such limited options facing them it is perhaps equally unsurprising that so many Romanian voters opted instead for a radical alternative in the elections of 2000, giving Corneliu Vadim Tudor and his ultra-nationalist Greater Romania Party such a substantial vote.

At the root of the Convention's failure in 2000 was its own organisational weakness. The National Liberals abandoned the formation when they decided they had a better chance of

⁵⁷³ Brian Barry, *Review Article: Exit, Voice and Loyalty*, *British Journal of Political Science*, vol 4, January 1974, page 91.

electoral success on their own. The main civic society organisations gave up on the Convention too. And there is no talk of foreign electoral expertise being drafted in to help the campaign. Indeed, on the eve of the election even the National Peasant Party's own chief press spokesman was questioning the value of the Convention.⁵⁷⁴ Fatalism overcame the Convention's leadership and the bitter divisions on the centre-right led the Convention to spend most of its campaigning energy attacking its former allies rather than focusing on the dangers of a victory for Iliescu or Tudor.⁵⁷⁵ Efforts to persuade the electorate that the government actually had delivered on many of its promises made no impact – the electorate was no longer inclined to listen.⁵⁷⁶

Sharman and Phillips argue, based on their study of Bulgaria's Union of Democratic Forces, that learning and consequent consolidation by parties even in new democracies is problematic and slow. Parties need time and feedback in order to learn and adapt. Intervening variables – particularly the degree of leadership autonomy and the degree that dominant factions are entrenched can block consolidation.⁵⁷⁷ The Convention had seven years and two election defeats to learn from but the greatest strains on the organisation arose when they assumed power after 1996, and then the Convention's decline was so rapid there was little opportunity to adapt. The individual parties within the alliance acted as equivalent to party factions – only with even stronger institutionalised gravity than less autonomous traditional factions and this in turn lessened the autonomy of the Convention leadership. The absence of a single dominant party within the Convention and of a leader willing and able to drive the creation of a consolidated formation combined with strongly entrenched loyalty to the constituent parties and varying incentive structures for the different member organisations to over-come the formalised unity of the Conventions statutes or programmes. As a result a 'Democratic Convention identity' was never able to establish itself as more than merely an election symbol.

⁵⁷⁴ Adrian Iorgulescu a atacat dur PNTCD, *Romania Libera*, 18 October 2000, page 3.

⁵⁷⁵ La intalnirea cu membri ai GDS, Stoica a lansat noi acuzatii impotriva PNTCD, *Romania Libera*, 7 August 2000.

⁵⁷⁶ CDR-2000 a lansat programul politic si economic, *Romania Libera*, 9 October 2000, page 1.

⁵⁷⁷ Jason Sharman and Robert Phillips, *An internalist perspective on party consolidation and the Bulgarian Union of Democratic Forces*, *European Journal of Political Research*, vol. 43, no. 3, May 2004, page 400.

Chapter 6 – in search of an ideology

National Liberal and National Peasant leaders had persecuted histories. The struggle between the Front and the opposition became an ethical contest. The terminology of confrontation was not political it was ethical. The supporters of the Convention thought it was an ethical movement too. But when it came to power, well, politics is politics. The supporters were surprised it [the Convention] was not so ethical in office.⁵⁷⁸

The consolidation, growth and eventual failure of the Democratic Convention prompt four questions that relate to its ideological development. Did the parties that made up the Convention possess coherent ideological positions? Were those ideologies so contradictory that they undermined the development of a more effective operational structure? Was there any attempt to craft a unifying ideological position for the Convention itself as distinct from its constituent parties? And if that ideological development was lacking, did it contribute to the Convention's ultimate failure? This chapter explores the ideological roots of the political right in Romania and the stages of development that followed the fall of Communism in an attempt to answer those four questions. It begins by examining the ideology of the constituent members of the Convention from a historical perspective to determine how distinct their ideological positioning was. It then examines how the Convention and its member organisations viewed five core elements of centre-right ideology: anti-Communism; economic reform; national unity; democracy; and attitudes to the church. In each case it traces change over time and compares promise with delivery in an attempt to establish whether ideology acted as a glue or a solvent for the Convention. The chapter then goes on to look at the two prominent issues that could be said to characterise a Convention ideology as distinct from that of its members (by virtue of their salience to Convention narratives and particularly those of the Convention's titular leader, Emil Constantinescu: a 'return to the West', and the remaking of society and the state via a moral crusade.

⁵⁷⁸ Interview with Zoe Petre.

As set out in chapter two above, the nature of political ideology (particularly on the centre-right) has been relatively neglected by political scientists. However, Szczerbiak and Hanley have suggested that the crafting of a broad, integrative narrative that seeks to “reconcile liberal-capitalist modernisation with traditional moral values and specific local and national identities,” is an important element in explaining the success or failure of a centre-right formation.⁵⁷⁹ This chapter will show that the constituent parts of the Democratic Convention did have recognisable and coherent ideological positions that were not obviously in conflict with each other but that there was only a very limited attempt to craft a distinct ideological identity for the Convention itself; and further that while a number of significant actors among the Convention elite argue that ideological differences played a major part in explaining the Convention’s demise in practice this does not seem to have been the case. Rather it was a failure of organisation and leadership which meant that the conditions were not created where a cohesive ideological identity could be created for the Convention.

6.1 The evolution of Romania’s right ideology

Romania lacked the experiences of intellectual dissent or regime experimentation that were features of Communist-era Poland, Czechoslovakia and Hungary.⁵⁸⁰ Varujan Vosganian, who attempted to set out a coherent ideological position in his book on the Romanian right, points to the lack of Communist-era opposition as contributing to the absence of a centre-right appeal in the post-Communist period:

In this period [the 1990s], in Romania there was a multi-party system but a real pluralism did not exist. The political forces that did exist oscillated between the extreme left and the centre. The right of politics was absent. This situation profoundly destabilised the forces of politics and had negative consequences for reform...In our country the fight against the Communist dictatorship did not exist in a

⁵⁷⁹ Szczerbiak and Hanley, page 16.

⁵⁸⁰ See chapter 2 above

structured, consistent way. Civic, anti-Communist resistance was exiled and dissipated.⁵⁸¹

Instead, in Vosgianian's view, a group of dissidents who were opposed to Ceausescu but not anti-Communist took the lead in the 1989 revolution and were the only ones prepared for post-Communist politics. With only a few exceptions such as Doina Cornea and Gabriel Andreescu, the leadership of the opposition to the National Salvation Front (and therefore to Communism) thus passed to the historic parties.⁵⁸²

Lacking a strong resistance legend, or a home-grown political programme developed in the Communist years, the re-formed historic parties drew heavily on their pre-Communist past. Large parts of the party's leadership had been involved in the parties before the Communist take-over.⁵⁸³ As a result, the re-formed parties' historic identities were important reference points for their ideological positioning after 1989.

The National Peasant Party had been formed from the 1926 merger of the National Party (which, until 1918 had been a regional party acting as the voice of the Romanian community in Hapsburg Transylvania and agitating for the union of the region with the existing Romanian state) and the Peasant Party which operated in the Regat.⁵⁸⁴ The Peasant Party had its roots on the radical left of politics, advocating the transfer of land ownership to the peasantry (and of mineral resources to the state) and administrative reform giving rural areas more autonomy.⁵⁸⁵ The merged party's first political programme (published in 1926) had a more moderate tone calling for administrative reform, an expansion of public education, freedom of religious belief, agricultural reform, measures to encourage the development of small and medium sized businesses and the equal treatment of foreign and domestic capital.⁵⁸⁶

⁵⁸¹ Varujan Vosgianian, *Mesajul Dreptei Romanesti*, Nemira, Bucharest, 2001, pp. 74-75.

⁵⁸² Vosgianian, page 75.

⁵⁸³ See chapter 5 below.

⁵⁸⁴ National Peasant Party, *PNTCD Serving Romania – a synthesis of the party's history*, Bucharest, 2002, page 14. The Regat is the colloquial term for the original Romanian state formed after 1878 from the provinces of Walachia and Moldova.

⁵⁸⁵ Preamble to the Peasant Party constitution, reproduced in Gheorghe Sbarna, *Partidele Politice din Romania 1918 – 1940*, Editura Sylvi, Bucharest, 2002, pp. 124 – 126.

⁵⁸⁶ National Peasant Party programme reproduced in Gheorghe Sbarna, pp. 130 – 132.

Pre-war land reform together with the collectivisation of agriculture and the profound changes in the structure of Romanian society brought about by the Communist regime rendered much of the party's early emphasis on land ownership irrelevant by 1989.⁵⁸⁷ Instead, post-Communist party leaders focused on the legacy of Iuliu Maniu whose leadership of the party spanned the pre- and post-war period. Maniu's resistance to Communism was a powerful symbol but so too was his loyalty to the party.⁵⁸⁸

Gabriel Tepelea, vice president of the National Peasant Party through the 1990s and one of the class of 'seniors' who dominated the leadership, summarises the party's creed, the centrality of its stance against totalitarianism and the significance of the party's pre-Communist leadership:

In 1946, in the small opening of the window for liberty, between the Fascist dictatorship and the Communist invasion, Iuliu Maniu felt the need to set out the four fundamental principles of the [National Peasant Party]:

- Christian morals
- Enlightened patriotism
- Democracy
- Social justice

It is this synthesis of principles which remained the basis for our past political battles; it is at the same time, a creed which guided us through the worst years of darkness and suffering.⁵⁸⁹

⁵⁸⁷ The rapid decollectivisation of large parts of agriculture in the early 1990s also meant restitution of land ownership in rural areas failed to become a powerfully salient issue except for owners of large pre-Communist era estates. See below for more details.

⁵⁸⁸ *Romania Libera*, for example carried a number of articles celebrating Maniu's birth date on 8th January 1997 in which the enduring relevance of his politics was set out. In 2003, the National Peasant Party held a conference to mark the anniversaries of the deaths of Maniu (50 years) and Ion Mihalache (leader of the Peasant Party before it merged with the National Party and who died ten years after Maniu). The conference drew contributions from Ion Diaconescu, Victor Ciorbea and Ana Blandiana among others. National Peasant Party, *Anul Comemorativ Maniu-Mihalache Sesiune de Comunicari*, Bucharest, 2003. Maniu's portrait still dominates the entrance to the party's headquarters in Bucharest.

⁵⁸⁹ National Peasant Party, *Pe Acelasi Drum*, (a synthesis of National Peasant Party doctrine), Tritonic, Bucharest, 2000, page 10.

These four basic tenets of the party's identity appear repeatedly in the National Peasant discourse. The party held its first Congress of the post-Communist era in September 1991 where it affirmed that the National Peasant's doctrine was in essence Christian democratic, restating the fundamental principles of Christian morals, enlightened patriotism, democracy and social justice.⁵⁹⁰ Corneliu Coposu personally identifies these elements of Maniu's mantra as profoundly influencing his own political beliefs.⁵⁹¹ In January 1990, Corneliu Coposu set out the National Peasant Party programme as prioritising: national security and integrity of borders; civil liberties and the rule of law; introduction of a market economy and restitution of property; welfare provision and the right to form free trades unions; free universities and the promotion of Christian morals; separation of powers and free elections; equal treatment of minorities and religions in the spirit of the Alba Iulia declaration of 1918.⁵⁹²

The party sought a centre ground between classic liberalism and socialism, in keeping with the image of West European Christian Democratic parties. It declared itself to be against class war, xenophobia, absolute individualism, a strong and boundless state and in favour of tolerance for national minorities.⁵⁹³ Over time, the National Peasants also began to co-opt more traditionally conservative thinking. The party's 1996 congress declared its aim as being to reconstruct society through the fundamental traditional institutions of family, school and church.⁵⁹⁴ Its approach drawn in terms of a moral crusade but the core of its identity remained uncompromising anti-Communism and the Christian-centrist roots inherited from Maniu:

[our priorities are] the moral and political reconstruction of our nation, putting an emphasis on the traditional institutions that have served us enduringly from the past:

⁵⁹⁰ Stan Stoica, *Dictionarul*, page 87

⁵⁹¹ *In Memoriam – Corneliu Coposu*, Recording of interview with Corneliu Coposu, published by Fundatia Agnus Dei, Bucharest, Romania, 2005.

⁵⁹² *Romania Libera*, 10 January 1990, page 3.

⁵⁹³ Programul PNTCD, *Romania Libera*, 31 October 1991, page 5.

⁵⁹⁴ Congresul Partidului National Taranesc Crestin Democrat, *Romania Libera*, 1 October 1991, page 3.

family, church and the school. It is imperative to realize national reconciliation in the spirit of Christian morals.⁵⁹⁵

While the National Peasants avoided significant divisions around ideological positions during the 1990s, the National Liberals were prone to frequent splits. The divisions within the National Liberal Party were principally driven by personalities and differences over tactics (as explored in chapter 3 above) but ideological disputes did feature also. Like the National Peasants, the National Liberals looked back to pre-Communist memories to shape post-Communist actions. The party's pre-war manifestos made radical calls for the protection of minority rights, for progressive taxation, reform of labour laws to improve workers rights, decentralisation and the break-up of large estates.⁵⁹⁶ In 1923, Ion Duca described liberal doctrine as: 'progress in all its forms within a framework of private property'.⁵⁹⁷ The pre-war National Liberal Party built its support on the base of the emerging urban middle class in Romania and made the construction of the nation state the centrepiece of its approach.⁵⁹⁸ Over the post-Communist period it acquired a reputation as a 'party of business', more experienced and hard-nosed than the National Peasants but also less sympathetic to the needs of the wider electorate – a reputation the party became keen to shed.⁵⁹⁹

At the party's re-launch in 1990 it proposed a continuation of pre-Communist liberal traditions, focusing on a guarantee of individual liberties, the separation of powers, restoration of freedom and democracy and the guarantee of religious freedoms and minority rights.⁶⁰⁰ The programme adopted by the National Liberals' Permanent Delegation in July 1991 set as its core objective the introduction of 'real democracy based on private property, the free market economy and free competition'. To achieve this it envisaged the restitution

⁵⁹⁵ Din rezolutia Congresul PNTCD, *Romania Libera*, 23 January 1996, page 3.

⁵⁹⁶ Sbarna, pp. 52 – 77.

⁵⁹⁷ Sbarna, pp. 52 – 77. Duca was first elected as a National Liberal parliamentarian in 1907 and was appointed Prime Minister in November 1933. He was assassinated six weeks later by a supporter of the far-right Iron Guard.

⁵⁹⁸ Tom Gallagher, *Theft*, pp. 22 – 33.

⁵⁹⁹ Interview with Dan Motreanu, General Secretary of the National Liberal Party, May 2008, Bucharest.

⁶⁰⁰ Ioan Scurtu, *Enciclopedia partidelor politice din Romania 1859 – 2003*, pp. 214 – 223.

of state property; decentralised management of economic entities and the attraction of foreign capital.⁶⁰¹

These aspirations strike a rather pragmatic tone over economic policy – they did not give a leading place to privatisation or the ending of price subsidies, for example.⁶⁰² The split between party leader Radu Campeanu and his opponents in the party developed an ideological angle in response to this cautious approach. A small group of proponents of neo-liberalism gathered around the businessman Dinu Patriciu, forming the National Liberal Party – Youth Wing which advocated ‘Shock Therapy’ to transform Romania’s economy and society.⁶⁰³ Most of this group went on to form the Liberal Party ’93 whose criticism of socialism was drawn from its strident economic analysis:

Until now, in not one part of the socialist world, not the smallest social progress can be found. The economies are ruined in direct proportion to the purity of the socialism they adopted. Where private property was completely abolished, the ruin was complete... Where the taking of private property was only partial, the ruin was also only partial. It was the case in Sweden, in England in the 1970s, in France in the 1990s...⁶⁰⁴

One commentator claimed the absence of a leader capable of crafting a distinctive liberal identity was the cause of their constant disunity.⁶⁰⁵ Dinu Zamfirescu, one of the leaders of the Liberal Party ’93 identified National Liberal vice president Viorel Catarama as an obstacle to the reunification of the party because of his ‘statist’ views.⁶⁰⁶ As explored in chapter three, above, the National Liberals lost considerable influence within the Democratic Convention as a result of their repeated divisions. Yet the party, largely reunited by 1996 within the Convention, does not appear to have driven a particular ideological agenda within the formation suggesting either that its ideological position was

⁶⁰¹ Scurtu, pp. 214 – 223.

⁶⁰² Romania Libera also characterised the programme – which included pledges to support a referendum to choose between a republic and the return of the monarchy and measures to spread the use of minority languages in education – as pragmatic. Forumul ideilor liberale, *Romania Libera*, 30 July 1991, page 2.

⁶⁰³ Un partid, doua conceptii, *Romania Libera*, 10 July 1990, page 2.

⁶⁰⁴ Partidul Liberal 1993, *Manifestul Liberal*, Bucharest, October 1993.

⁶⁰⁵ Galceva liberala nu-si gaseste pacea, *Romania Libera*, 15 January 1997, page 3 (author, Henri Zalis).

⁶⁰⁶ Un partid puternic, dar cine il faca, *Romania Libera*, 27 January 1997, page 3.

not radically different from the dominant formations or that pragmatism was the favoured approach, trading ideological commitments for other political benefits.

The smaller parties within the Democratic Convention had a limited impact on its ideological positioning. The historic Social Democrats left the Convention in 1995 and found a home more amenable to its centre-left prospectus with Petre Roman's Democrat Party.⁶⁰⁷ The Civic Alliance Party proclaimed a liberal economic doctrine and prioritised the protection of civil and democratic rights. At its formation it adopted the programme of the Civic Alliance as its own.⁶⁰⁸ The Hungarian Democratic Union had an unusual internal structure – attempting to represent the entire spread of political opinions within the Hungarian community.⁶⁰⁹ Where the Hungarian Democratic Union had an important impact was in acting as a brake on any radical nationalist leanings within the Convention (see the section on nationalism below).

So the constituent parts of the Convention each made an attempt to create a recognisable ideological position for itself. Within the Convention did these ideological positions prove to be contradictory when it came to the main issues that identify a centre-right formation?

6.2 Anti-Communism

The Democratic Convention was organisationally weak with a regularly changing membership but there is one thing that fractious Convention politicians agreed on – that it was first and foremost a coalition against Communism. The strength of the formation's anti-Communism was a source of cohesion but it was also a cause of weakness – it created distrust within the Convention (due to tensions over how far and how fast anti-Communist legislation should be introduced) and created barriers to co-operation with potential pro-reform collaborators who carried associations with the former regime (the Democrat Party). In office, the Convention's failure to enact practical measures to deal with the legacy of Romania's Communist past left significant numbers of supporters feeling disillusioned and contributed to damaging splits.

⁶⁰⁷ They formed the Union of Social Democrats and contested the 1996 elections on a common platform as mentioned in chapter three.

⁶⁰⁸ Un partid anticomunist, *Romania Libera*, 9 July 1991, page 2.

⁶⁰⁹ Interview with Csaba Takacs, January 2009, Cluj.

The Convention's early appeal was cast in terms of a moral crusade which invoked the restitution of the rule of law and the introduction of a functioning market economy as the means to deliver an end to the continuing dominance of a Communist-era mentality in politics. The Convention's 1992 election manifesto opened with the statement that its fundamental objective was to bring a complete end to the Communist system. The change represented nothing less than a moral reconstruction of the nation, shedding the negative effects of decades of Communist dictatorship:

The Democratic Convention represents an alliance of parties and formations which have a democratic vocation and which opt for a profound change in Romania through the construction of a state of law and a free and open market economy...

The fundamental objective of [the Convention's programme for government] is to end totally the Communist system, by clarifying understanding and changing the mentality, from reconstructing a state of law and from the impulse of the market economy, by ensuring social security, reintegrating the national territory and reintegrating Romania into the European orbit.

The Democratic Convention underlines the necessity to reconstruct the natural rapport between morals and politics, retrieving this from under the influence of demagoguery, cynicism and pathological thirst for power that predominated in 45 years of Communism and to get back to the traditional spirit of responsibility, tolerance and enlightened patriotism that formed the basis for the modern Romanian state.⁶¹⁰

The success of the National Salvation Front in retaining power after the fall of Communism resulted in Romania's transition being widely seen as incomplete. The lack of home-grown dissident thought and the capturing of the popular revolution by the left meant that the new democratic opposition came to be led by old parties – particularly the National Liberals and the National Peasant who had dominated Romanian politics before the Second World War and whose leaders had suffered exile or imprisonment by the Communist regime. Unsurprisingly, their anti-Communism was strident.

⁶¹⁰ Democratic Convention, *Platforma – Program a Conventiei Democratice*, 1992.

The frustration at the apparent failure to remove Communist apparatchiks from power was made clear in the Declaration of Timisoara, published on 11th March, 1990. Point 1 of the Declaration stressed that the revolution was not only against Ceausescu but against Communism. Point 8, critically, stated that former Communist Party activists and members of the internal security services (the *Securitate*) should not be permitted to stand as candidates for election to public office.⁶¹¹

From this point on the National Salvation Front came to be seen as synonymous with continuing Communist power. Its activities were viewed as deliberate in re-making the administrative structures of the former Communist regime and in orchestrating events such as the inter-communal violence at Targu Mures and the attacks on student protesters in Bucharest's University Square in May 1990.⁶¹² The language and tone of politics itself became framed more in terms of ethics than of everyday politics with opposition to the Front being viewed as almost a moral crusade.⁶¹³

The radicalisation of the politics of anti-Communism proved a source of weakness for the Convention as well as an initial cause of unity - thanks in large part to the different experiences of the National Liberals and the National Peasants at the time of the Communist take-over but also because of more contemporary fears over the exposure of clandestine collaboration with the former regime. As discussed in chapter three, the National Peasants saw themselves as the rightful winners of the 1946 elections which had been manipulated to deliver an overwhelming Communist victory.⁶¹⁴ The National Liberals, on the other hand, had co-operated with the new regime at the end of the war and the notion of pragmatic alliance making in the perceived national interest entered the genetic make-up of the party.⁶¹⁵ In 1991, the National Liberals joined the Front-dominated interim government led by Prime Minister Theodor Stolojan, a move which drove a wedge between the party and the National Peasants who viewed it in terms of a betrayal.⁶¹⁶

⁶¹¹ Declaration of Timisoara, text reproduced in Pavel and Huiu, pp. 515 – 518.

⁶¹² Interview with Csaba Takacs. Cluj

⁶¹³ Interview with Zoe Petre.

⁶¹⁴ Martin McCauley (ed), *Communist Power in Europe, 1944 – 49*, Barnes and Noble, New York, 1977.

⁶¹⁵ Valeriu Stoica, *Provocari*, pp. 12-13.

⁶¹⁶ Diaconescu, pp. 88 - 92.

Despite the strength of anti-Communist sentiment among opposition politicians, the lustration process never took root in Romania.⁶¹⁷ This was due partly to the continued dominance of government by the left up to 1996 (meaning that the momentum and case for change had been somewhat lost by the time the centre-right came to power); partly (as discussed in chapter three) to the incomplete nature of the Convention's election victory in 1996 which necessitated coalition making with the Democrats; but also, no doubt, to the potential political risks of exploring the pasts of a Communist Party which reportedly had around four million members.⁶¹⁸ Some – most notably President Emil Constantinescu – also blame a continuing control over state, judicial and business apparatus exercised by a Front/Securitate mafia for the failure to implement reforms.⁶¹⁹

Co-operation across the Communist-successor/anti-Communist dividing line has clearly been a critical issue in the evolution of the centre-right in Romania. The infusion of politics with the rhetoric of the moral crusade against Communism meant that co-operation with the Democrat Party, in particular, was difficult for many to accept and the party became a lightning conductor for criticism over divisions within the 1996 – 2000 coalition government.⁶²⁰ The academic Horia Patepievici pointed to the contrasting genealogy of the National Peasants and the Democrat Party – the nucleus of one party being former political prisoners of the Communist regime, the other being drawn principally from within its apparatus - as explaining Democrat resistance to progress with lustration processes.⁶²¹ Yet the failure of the Convention to confront the issues arising from the country's Communist past - particularly the publishing of records relating to public figures' collaboration with the Communist regime - cannot be wholly blamed on the political manoeuvres of the Democrat Party. The Convention – indeed even the two main parties in the Convention - were exposed to internal tensions on the issue. As early as the 1992 election, the Convention had adopted the language of 'national reconciliation' in which to frame its plans to address

⁶¹⁷ Lustration being the limiting of participation in civic life by former Communist Party members.

⁶¹⁸ Lavinia Stan, *Lustration in Romania, the story of a failure*, Studia Politica, Nemira, vol. 6, no. 1 (2006), pp. 135 – 156. Stan reports one Social Democrat Deputy claiming, during a debate on proposed lustration laws, that more than half of the population in the country were associated with the former regime when the families of those who were party members were taken into account.

⁶¹⁹ Ucen and Surochak.

⁶²⁰ Zoe Petre, for example, reports her son reacting to the creation of the coalition with the Democrats by saying he felt that his life-long love had betrayed him. Interview with Zoe Petre, Bucharest, February 2009.

⁶²¹ In cautarea motivelor crizei, *Revista* 22, number 5 of 1998, February 1998.

collaboration. The election manifesto of that year explicitly absolved the millions of 'passive' party members who had not sought illicit advantage from joining the Communist Party and focused its attention on former activists and paid party staff who it aimed to exclude from public life.⁶²² And once in power the Convention leadership showed little appetite for action.

It took the initiative of National Peasant parliamentarian Nicolae Dumitrescu – against the wishes of his party leadership – to begin the process of legislating to open the files of the Communist era secret police with the dual aims of allowing citizens to view their own files and to place in the public domain those of politicians and senior officials.⁶²³ The process of taking the legislation through parliament was subject to repeated delays and amendments from politicians of all sides.⁶²⁴ Horia Patepievici's nomination by the National Peasants to chair the National Council for the Study of the Securitate Archives (the body which was set up by the Dumitrescu legislation) was rejected by parliament and other nominees such as Democrat Andrei Plesu were opposed because of their former membership of the Communist Party. The legislation was subjected to numerous amendments that left Dumitrescu himself struggling to support the final version of the bill.⁶²⁵ The manoeuvring created further delays in the process of beginning the investigations, fuelling the impression that the political class was deliberately dragging its feet to protect itself from exposure.⁶²⁶

The Civic Alliance explicitly called for lustration laws and for the publication of the Securitate files of those involved in politics (together with reform of the electoral system and drastic action against corruption) in one of its later efforts to revive the Convention.⁶²⁷

⁶²² Even its stated desire to exclude Communist activists from parliament implicitly accepted that this may not be achieved through legislation, instead pleading with the electorate not to vote for the former Communists if changes were not made to electoral law. Democratic Convention, *Platforma-Program 1992*.

⁶²³ Senator Constantin Ticu Dumitrescu launched the legislation in March 1997. A CIS poll at the end of the year found that 57% of respondents backed Dumitrescu's initiative against 17% who backed the National Peasant leadership in their opposition to the move. *Romania Libera*, 23 December 1997, page 3.

⁶²⁴ Tom Gallagher, *Theft*, Hurst, London, 2005, pp. 187 – 192.

⁶²⁵ Lavinia Stan, *Lustration*.

⁶²⁶ Securitate Shuffle, *Central European Review*, 17th April 2000. Available online at <http://www.ce-review.org/00/15/lovatt15.html> accessed on 25 March 2009.

⁶²⁷ Civic Alliance, *Scrisoare deschisa a alantei civice catre CDR*, Bucharest, May 1999. Available at <http://www.aliantacivica.ro/documente/Scrisoare%20deschisa%20a%20Aliantei%20Civice%20catre%20C.D.R.%20-%2018%20mai%201999.htm>, accessed 29th July 2008.

But the leaders of the Convention failed to respond to pressure, either from within the organisation or from public opinion, to drive forward the process of lustration. President Emil Constantinescu criticises the intellectual elite for expecting him to act unconstitutionally in order to initiate the process earlier and his chief political counsellor Zoe Petre defends the sluggish process on the grounds that the mechanism for investigating and publishing the archives had to be created from scratch.⁶²⁸

Despite the clear loss of credibility that the Convention suffered as a result of events like the dismissal of Valerian Stan and Victor Ciorbea, it is difficult to escape the conclusion that the leaders of the Convention lacked the will to follow through on their early anti-Communist rhetoric once they had come to power, either as a result of fear of the consequences for their own parties or because of the realpolitik of coalition management.

6.3 Economic reform

Three elements dominated early debate over economic reform: the return to its previous owners of property that had been nationalised by the Communist regime, privatisation of state-run enterprises and liberalisation of prices. The first two were fundamental to the Democratic Convention's political agenda and rested on a conviction that the creation of respect for the right to private property was central to the new economic era and also reflected the direct interests of the historic opposition groups.⁶²⁹ The third was the subject of some difference of opinion between the Convention members particularly as the damaging effect of hyper inflation became clear.⁶³⁰ The restitution of land and of housing to pre-Communist owners was a fraught affair and one that caused a major rift between the Democratic Convention and the Democrat Party when in office together after 1996. Privatisation became an increasingly salient issue as seven years of left-dominated government resisted radical moves in this area. By 1996 it formed one of the corner-stones

⁶²⁸ Both comments are taken from *Revista 22*'s round table on the tenth anniversary of the 1996 elections. Available at www.revista22.ro/alegeri_1996-3263.html, accessed on 18 February 2009.

⁶²⁹ Zoe Petre identifies restitution of property, dealing with the country's Communist past (particularly the opening of Securitate files) and economic reform as the three main domestic priorities for the government elected in 1996 (interview, February 2009, Bucharest).

⁶³⁰ "Terapie soc" sau terapie ponderata, *Romania Libera*, 7 February 1991, page 3.

of the new government's attempts to recover Romania's reputation in the eyes of important external government underwriters such as the International Monetary Fund.⁶³¹

In the agricultural sector the break-up of state-run collective farms was achieved rapidly, almost spontaneously. Legislation introduced in 1991, which decentralised decision making about land distribution to village authority level, did little more than bring the law into line with existing practice.⁶³² The return of land to former owners, and particularly of larger parcels of land, was more problematic. Governments through the 1990s passed a series of laws that returned successively larger land-holdings to their previous owners but even during the 1996 - 2000 period, the return of larger holdings was resisted.⁶³³

Restitution of housing was even more politically charged. Estimates of the number of homes confiscated during the Communist period range between 240,000 and 640,000. The National Salvation Front government allowed tenants of apartments built in the Communist era to buy their homes at prices 'equivalent to the cost of a TV.'⁶³⁴ Owners of the land on which the apartment blocks were built were eventually compensated but the question of what to do about those living in property that had been nationalised but had avoided the Communist bulldozers gave rise to bitter debate. The issue almost brought down the coalition government at the end of 1997 when the minister with responsibility for anti-corruption measures – Valerian Stan – threatened to publish a dossier that implicated members of the Democrat Party (and others) in the illegal exploitation of state-owned so-called 'protocol homes'.⁶³⁵ Issues of restitution were not finally resolved until the Social Democrats returned to power following the elections at the end of 2000, the motivation being demands made by the EU accession programme.⁶³⁶

⁶³¹ Tom Gallagher, *Theft*, pp. 178 – 185.

⁶³² Andrew Cartwright, *The Return of the Peasant, land reform in post-Communist Romania*, Ashgate, Aldershot, 2001.

⁶³³ Theodor Stolojan asserts that all the main parties agreed that land restitution was necessary but ideological differentiation resulted in disagreements over the nature of the process (interview, Brussels, June 2008). Zoe Petre takes a rather more cynical view, claiming that the Democrats resisted the restitution of forests, for example, because of the profits to be gained from links to the state-run forestry company Romsilva (the party controlled the forestry ministry in the coalition government) (interview, February 2009).

⁶³⁴ Lavinia Stan, *The Roof Over Our Heads: Property Restitution in Romania*, *Journal of Communist Studies and Transition Politics*, vol. 22, no. 2, June 2006, pp. 180 – 205.

⁶³⁵ Interview with Valerian Stan, Bucharest, January 2009.

⁶³⁶ Lavinia Stan, *Roof over our heads*.

Despite the difficulties encountered by the Convention in pursuing a legislative programme for property restitution in government, there is no doubt that it formed a key part of the Convention's identity. It linked directly to the interests of some influential sponsors (particularly representatives of the Romanian diaspora) and it fitted with an economic outlook which prioritised the legal recognition of property rights as the foundation of a functioning market economy. The Civic Alliance, for instance, published a detailed plan for economic reform, the first priority of which was to create an 'authentic market economy.' To achieve this it was necessary to put in place certain 'inalienable conditions': a radical restructuring of the system of property rights and the ending of the state's monopoly in this area; constitutional guarantees of the rights of citizens' rights to private property; guarantees of the right to engage freely in economic activities; ending the states role in direct control of economic entities; creation of institutions to aid the functioning of the three key markets (goods, labour and capital); the liberalisation of prices and the convertibility of the currency.⁶³⁷

Wider economic reform was a common theme for centre-right politicians, but rapid and extensive liberalisation was treated warily by most in Romania. Although a number of the émigrés who returned to lead the historic parties had built successful business careers in the west, Romania lacked a cohort of home-grown economists who were committed to the ideals of economic liberalisation. Theodor Stolojan, an economist who served as Prime Minister in 1991 and was presidential candidate for the National Liberals in 2000 acknowledges that it was only after a number of years of working for the World Bank that he came to fully appreciate the workings of the free market and the significance of private property in its operation.⁶³⁸ Political economist Liliana Pop points out that even the economic journal most closely associated with this school of thought – *Oeconomica* – still promoted state-led solutions.⁶³⁹

Ahead of the May 1990 elections, National Liberal leader Radu Campeanu spoke of the importance of privatisation of industry coupled with keeping in mind social welfare needs

⁶³⁷ Reforma economica: pozitia de principiu a Alianta Civica, *Romania Libera*, 3 May 1991, page 3.

⁶³⁸ Interview, Brussels, June 2008.

⁶³⁹ Interview with Liliana Pop, London, February 2008.

which suggested a more cautious approach.⁶⁴⁰ The Civic Alliance warned of the dangers of spiralling inflation if prices were liberalised before the capacity of domestic production had expanded to meet demand, and called for the urgent introduction of measures of social protection to help the unemployed and pensioners and to provide medical insurance.⁶⁴¹ The National Peasants rejected the doctrine of ‘absolute individualism’ envisaged by the adoption of radical liberal economic reforms.⁶⁴² In its 1996 programme it referred to Christian Democracy’s opposition to ‘savage liberalism’ and proposed instead an economic and social programme based on Christian morals of solidarity, tolerance, dialogue, pluralism, creativity and subsidiarity.⁶⁴³ The economic policies it proposed prioritised measures to ease the pressures on private business (and particularly agriculture) rather than on radical moves to accelerate market liberalisation.⁶⁴⁴

Some voices, though, were raised in favour of more radical economic solutions. The splits that occurred in the National Liberal Party in the early 1990s originated over disagreements about strategy but the younger activists who opposed Campeanu’s approach also coalesced around more distinct neo-liberal policy proposals. The manifesto of the Liberal Party ’93 speaks of the market, the individual and (private) property being the three fundamental concepts of liberalism and called for a dramatic reduction in the role of the state.⁶⁴⁵ The Alternative Romania Party (which later became the Union of Right Forces) also agitated for neo-liberal reforms. Its *Manifesto of the Right*, published in 1998, saw capitalism and the right wing of politics as synonymous and called for a freeing of the Romanian economy to increase the prosperity of its citizens. It demanded a reduction in bureaucracy, equal treatment of foreign and domestic capital, recognition of the importance of small and medium sized businesses and the encouragement of initiative and risk-taking.⁶⁴⁶

⁶⁴⁰ Interview in *Romania Libera*, 24 January 1990.

⁶⁴¹ Civic Alliance, *Carta Aliantei Civice*, Bucharest, December 1990 (point 9). Available at <http://www.aliantacivica.ro/documente/Carta%20Aliantei%20Civice%20-%2014%20decembrie%201990.htm>, accessed 29 July 2008.

⁶⁴² Taken from the political programme adopted by the National Peasant Party at its first Congress in September 1991. Scurtu, pp. 227 – 234.

⁶⁴³ National Peasant Party *Pe Acelasi Drum*, page 14.

⁶⁴⁴ National Peasant Party *Pe Acelasi Drum*, pp. 24 – 31.

⁶⁴⁵ Partidul Liberal 1993, *Manifestul Liberal*, Bucharest, October 1993.

⁶⁴⁶ Uniunea Fortelor de Dreapta, *Manifestul dreptei*, Bucharest, 1998. Available at www.ufd.ro (downloaded on 11 February 2009).

Radu Vasile, the National Peasant Party General Secretary who went on to become Prime Minister, identified the promotion of a middle class as a key tenet of the party's approach. He reports meeting a German academic expert in Christian Democratic ideology who set out seven principles that constitute Christian Democracy, but it was clear to Vasile that the most essential was the creation of a middle class through economic policies which supported entrepreneurs and small businesses.⁶⁴⁷ Andrei Marga appears to have taken a slightly more radical line. In an article published in the magazine *Revista 22* in 1996, Marga links the need for decentralisation of administration (an old National Peasant theme) with the central need for a free market economy and, critically, the attraction of foreign investment to mitigate the negative impact on employment of freeing up the economy.⁶⁴⁸ In the event perhaps neither anticipated the scale of pain that had to be borne in order to transform the economy.⁶⁴⁹

The homogeneity of internal opinions regarding economics is perhaps also illustrated by the willingness of Convention leaders to hand over control of economic policy to non-party technocrats such as Finance Minister Daniel Daianu and then, in his role as Prime Minister, to Mugur Isarescu, a former governor of the National Bank. The danger posed by the appointment of technocrats to political roles is that they have no sense of partisanship to inform their actions. One of the sharpest illustrations involved Daianu: the 'Bell Helicopters' dispute. He was dismissed in September 1998 after refusing to sanction a government loan to the Romanian Air Force that would allow them to buy 96 helicopters from US manufacturer Bell on the grounds that it would derail budget deficit targets.⁶⁵⁰ The loan had received cabinet backing but Daianu continued to resist until the National Liberals backed the Prime Minister in the stand-off.⁶⁵¹ Daianu's stance may well have been grounded in sound economics but his actions showed little regard for the wider political interests of the government or the Convention.

⁶⁴⁷ *Democratia Crestina nu se regaseste in actele guvernarii*, Romania Libera, 23 September 1997, page 2

⁶⁴⁸ Quoted in Andrei Marga, *Iesirea din trecut*, Alma Mater, Cluj, 2002, pp. 13 – 23.

⁶⁴⁹ Real gross domestic product (GDP) fell by 7.3% in 1998 and inflation ran at over 40% for the year. GDP fell by a further 3.9% in the first half of 1999 with industrial output falling by 10.4% (the industrial sector accounted for 44% of the Romanian economy at this time.) Economist Intelligence Unit Country Reports, Romania Quarter 2 of 1999 (pp. 19 – 20) and Quarter 4 of 1999 (page 3).

⁶⁵⁰ Economist Intelligence Unit Country Report, Romania, Quarter 3 1998, page 12.

⁶⁵¹ Daianu claims that only the Democrat ministers led by Traian Basescu backed him in Cabinet. Interview with Daniel Daianu.

Once the Convention came to power, the impact of economic change became a political Tsunami that the governing coalition was too weak to withstand. The social costs of the accelerated economic reform programme combined with other policy choices – such as the decision to support NATO’s blockade of Serbia – and exogenous factors such as the Asian financial crisis to create a political environment in which the public appetite for reform rapidly diminished. In her study of the privatisation process in Romania, Liliana Pop quotes a series of responses to public opinion surveys that together demonstrate a cluster of negative attitudes to the process of marketisation and a profound absence of confidence in the economic situation.⁶⁵² In 1999, CURS found that 53% of respondents feared they would lose their job in the near future. In November 2000, CURS found that 74% of respondents would prefer a combination of job security and low pay to less job security and high pay. Support for the swift privatisation of state owned enterprises fell from 76% in 1991 to 46% in 1999 and the same survey found that more than 50% thought the state should support loss-making enterprises with direct payments.

Throughout the second half of 2000 the government faced a run of terrible economic news: in May the National Investment Fund collapsed which prompted a run on the banks and violent demonstrations in the centre of Bucharest; in September the International Monetary Fund withheld the third tranche of a loan, raising fears that Romania would slip into default on its debt obligations; and on 8th November – less than three weeks before the elections – the EU published a critical report which stated that Romania did not yet have a ‘functioning market economy’ thanks to a lack of progress in economic reform (according to the report, between 30% and 40% of GDP was accounted for by the informal economy).⁶⁵³ By November 2000, the difference between those with a positive and a negative view of banks was -54%. A few months later, the figure for private companies was -41%.⁶⁵⁴ The corrosive effect of economic challenges undermined public faith in the key institutions of the free market economy. It could be argued that the Convention had been slow in the

⁶⁵² The following figures are from Liliana Pop.

⁶⁵³ All details taken from Economist Intelligence Unit Country Reports, Romania July 2000 page 19, October 2000 page 16, January 2001 page 21.

⁶⁵⁴ All figures from Barometrul de opinie publica Mai 2004, Gallup Romania, May 2004. Available at www.gallup.ro/romania/poll_ro/releases/pro040604_ro.htm. In March 1997, 25% of voters had a positive opinion of banks and 59% a negative view; by November 2000 those figures had changed to +12 and -76. For private companies, the figures were +31 and -55 in March 1997, changing to +25 and -66 by May 2001.

implementation of economic reforms but it had retained its commitment to the essential tenets of liberalization throughout. The public, though, by the end of the Convention's term of office, were far from convinced of the benefits for themselves.

6.4 A united nation?

The 'national question' – or more accurately the Hungarian question - has played an important role in post-Communist Romanian politics with ethnicity forming a genuine cleavage within society.⁶⁵⁵ Modern Romania is more ethnically homogenous than its pre-war counterpart but a significant ethnic Hungarian minority remains in the north western counties. Fears over recidivism on one side and long maintained resentments over lost status and links to the motherland on the other combined to radicalise ethnic politics rapidly after the fall of Ceausescu.

The Hungarian Democratic Union was formed early in 1990 by a group of ethnic-Hungarian intellectuals based on the Transylvanian city of Cluj.⁶⁵⁶ In March, violence flared in the ethnically mixed city of Targu Mures. The truth about the events in the city has become as much clouded by manipulation, fear and rumour as the other events in Romania's troubled early transition, but they came to symbolise the potential for conflict between the ethnic communities.⁶⁵⁷

Radical (Romanian) nationalists exploited fears that Hungarians wanted to reclaim the Transylvanian region and that demands from the Hungarian Democratic Union for decentralised government were a step towards autonomy which would be followed by secession for the counties containing a majority Hungarian population. The issue created a problematic discourse for centre-right politicians who were torn between a natural (and popular) affinity for nationalist narratives and an awareness that not only were the Hungarian Democratic Union allies in the fight against continuing Communism but that important western sponsors expected the parties to shun radical nationalism. This was

⁶⁵⁵ The wider question of Romania's borders and relations with the Republic of Moldova in particular flickered into life from time to time but rarely with the intensity of the status of the Harghita-Covasna region of Romania where the majority of the population are ethnic Hungarians.

⁶⁵⁶ *Romania Libera*, 1 February 1990.

⁶⁵⁷ Gallagher, *Theft*, pp. 84 – 88.

reinforced by a genuine ideological commitment to minority rights that was adopted by the ‘civic liberals’ who cleaved to the Democratic Convention via such organisations as the Civic Alliance.

The historic parties felt that they could draw upon a heritage of resistance to radical nationalism (thanks to their opposition to Fascism) although there is an element of foundation myth in this since both the National Liberals and National Peasants displayed ‘ethno-chauvinism’ in their attitudes to the creation of the Greater Romanian state. Before the Second World War, both the National Liberals and the National Peasants resisted the more radical demands of nationalism, defending minority rights and casting nationalism in terms of the ‘noble’ struggle for independence.⁶⁵⁸ The National Peasants opposed xenophobia and promoted the notion of ‘enlightened patriotism’ in its earliest post-Communist programmes which it later defined as:

Love for one’s homeland; the promotion of national values; defending territorial integrity and asserting national sovereignty in accordance with EU and NATO membership; observing the rights and identity of national minorities.⁶⁵⁹

Ultimately, a shared sense among the opposition that they were all equally victims of the Communist regime meant that radical nationalist instincts were suppressed on both sides of the ethnic divide so as to focus on the common ‘enemy’, continuing Communism in the shape of Iliescu and the Front.⁶⁶⁰ The Convention’s 1992 election manifesto made clear statements in favour of respecting the rights of minorities to maintain their own cultural identity (within a unitary Romanian state) and stated that:

The Democratic Convention rejects winning political capital by manipulation of the national sentiments of the population by propagating suspicion and adversarial inter-ethnic relations.⁶⁶¹

⁶⁵⁸ Sbarna, pp. 76 – 77 and 155 – 160.

⁶⁵⁹ National Peasant Party, *The National Peasant Christian Democratic Party* (leaflet published in 2001).

⁶⁶⁰ As Gabor Kolumban, a vice president of the Hungarian Democratic Union, stated early in 1992, ‘we have made our union [the Democratic Convention] in order to defeat Communism.’ *Campaignia Electorală, Romania Libera*, 10 January 1992, page 2.

⁶⁶¹ Democratic Convention, *Platforma-Program 1992*.

Despite this, the national question did persist in creating tensions on the centre right in the opposition years. Radu Campeanu had used the perceived anti-national demands of the Hungarian Democratic Union as a pretext to withdraw the National Liberals from the Democratic Convention ahead of the 1992 elections and Csaba Takacs claims the Convention responded to growing nationalist ‘hysteria’ in the mid 1990s by adopting a more nationalist tone (and eventually forcing the withdrawal of the Hungarian party from the Convention – see chapter four above).⁶⁶²

In the period up to 1996, opposition to the ultra-nationalists became closely linked to opposition to Communism with the smaller nationalist parties being cast in the role of client party to the Social Democrats.⁶⁶³ The ‘Red Quadrilateral’ government formed by Nicolae Vacaroiu in 1992 was two parts red (the Social Democrats and the Socialist Workers Party) and two parts black (the Romanian National Unity Party and the Greater Romania Party). While the nationalists backed the left, on the other side of the contest the Hungarian Democratic Union shared the historic parties’ sense of victimhood at the hands of the Communist regime and were committed opponents of the Social Democrats in consequence.⁶⁶⁴

The National Unity Party was the leading nationalist party until the elections of 1996. It was dominated by its leader, Gheorghe Funar, radical mayor of Cluj but it also experienced regular bouts of internal conflict as a more moderate faction wrestled for control of the party. It formed a short-lived electoral alliance with the Democratic Agrarian Party in the mid-1990s but its electoral prospects suffered catastrophically from the close involvement of its leaders in the Caritas pyramid selling scandal.⁶⁶⁵ In the 1996 elections the party fell behind the Greater Romania Party and eventually Funar left to join forces with Vadim Tudor. The 1996 elections, though, gave few indications of the dramatic rise in support for Tudor and the Greater Romania Party that was to come.

⁶⁶² Interview with Csaba Takacs. Cluj

⁶⁶³ In an article from 1996, for example, the relationship between the Social Democrats and the National Unity Party was described as between a landlord and a tenant. Un partid fara viitor, *Romania Libera*, 5 February 1996, page 3.

⁶⁶⁴ Pavel and Huiu, pp. 226 – 229.

⁶⁶⁵ Abraham, pp. 387 – 390.

In office, the Democratic Convention took crucial steps to diffuse the national issue, first and foremost by bringing the Hungarian Democratic Union into government.⁶⁶⁶ Gallagher has pointed out that some in the Convention feared the political impact of bringing the Hungarian Democratic Union into office but their joining the government passed with almost no domestic reaction.⁶⁶⁷ The 1996 – 2000 government introduced reforms that broadened access to education in Hungarian and other minority languages.⁶⁶⁸ However, as mentioned in chapter 3, resistance from National Liberal and National Peasant legislators meant that the Convention failed to deliver on a key policy demand by the Hungarian Democratic Union: the creation of a state-funded Hungarian-language university.⁶⁶⁹

Frustration at the failure to secure key policy demands prompted conflict within the Hungarian Democratic Union. At the Union's Congress of May 1999, radicals used the Yugoslav conflict as cause to press for greater autonomy for the Hungarian-dominated counties. They launched a challenge to Marko Bela, leader of the Union, that was defeated by 274 votes to 157.⁶⁷⁰ The Congress went on to adopt a political programme which reads like a fairly mainstream centre-right appeal but which also aimed to consolidate the gains already made by their community:⁶⁷¹

- Recognition of national minorities and their equality in law as citizens
- Realisation of a state based on the rule of law and the separation of powers
- Constitutional guarantees of the inviolability of private property
- The creation of a market economy
- Restitution of church property
- A law on minority rights based on the European model ensuring freedom to use minority language in public and private life

⁶⁶⁶ Interview with Gabriel Andreescu.

⁶⁶⁷ Tom Gallagher, *Theft*, pp. 152 – 155.

⁶⁶⁸ Interview with Virgil Petrescu, National Peasant Party education minister, 1996 – 1997, Bucharest, May 2008.

⁶⁶⁹ PNL vrea doar facultate in limba maghiara, *Romania Libera*, 11 July 1998, page 3. National Liberal Deputy Sorin Stanescu, a member of the parliament's education commission opposed the creation of the Hungarian language university, backing instead an amendment proposed by National Peasant and former education minister Virgil Petrescu.

⁶⁷⁰ Economist Intelligence Unit Country Reports: Romania, Quarter 3 1999 pp. 13 – 14.

⁶⁷¹ Details from Stoica, *Dictionarul*.

- The development of peaceful and fruitful inter-ethnic co-operation

Throughout the 1990s the Convention had been unable to neutralise the nationalist right by capturing its electorate because of the Convention's internal dynamics (the emphasis placed on minority rights by its civil society sponsors and the desire to maintain good relations with the Hungarian Democratic Union) and its strong policy preference for a return to Western 'norms' and membership of Euro-Atlantic institutions. The elections of 2000 saw a spectacular rise in radical nationalism in the form of Corneliu Vadim Tudor. In the local elections of 2000, the Greater Romania Party won less than 7% of the vote in the County Council poll and elected just 66 mayors nationwide (2.6% of the total). The National Unity Party did even less well.⁶⁷² But the presidential campaign suited Tudor's demagogic style.⁶⁷³ While the National Peasants and the National Liberals concentrated their fire on each other (see chapter 3 above), Petre Roman and the Democrats were hampered by their association with the failings of the incumbent government. Tudor and the Greater Romania Party emerged as the challenger to a return to power of Ion Iliescu and the Social Democrats: the Greater Romania Party won the second largest number of seats and votes in the parliamentary elections of 2000 and Tudor won through to the run-off ballot with Ion Iliescu in the presidential poll. As the Convention 2000 formation crashed out of parliament and even failed to field its own presidential candidate, the failure to craft a position which appealed broadly to nationalist voters was exposed as a contributor to the Convention's failure in the most stark way.

6.5 Democracy – new or old?

The notion that a centre-right formation's attachment to democracy should be questionable seems incongruous but the conditions of Romania's transition created an unusual discourse in this arena. The effective capture of the transition to democracy by the National Salvation Front – by the left – allowed them to claim the mantle of bringers of democracy (see chapter 2). Furthermore, the opposition, dominated by the historic parties, retained a strong attachment to the return of the monarchy and a return to the liberal constitution of 1926

⁶⁷² Stan Stoica, *Dupa '89*, page 246

⁶⁷³ Gallagher, *Theft*, pp. 252 - 256

which gave the National Salvation Front a fruitful target to pursue, casting the opposition as anti-democratic and anachronistic.⁶⁷⁴

The community of Romanian exiles, who had considerable influence within the National Peasant Party, were particularly strongly pro-monarchy.⁶⁷⁵ Sentiment and personal ties to the Royal Family were no doubt important but there were more considered underpinnings to the position too. Pro-monarchists saw Spain's transition from dictatorship to democracy under a constitutional monarch as a model.⁶⁷⁶ As a result the National Peasants refused to support the new constitution in the referendum of December 1991.⁶⁷⁷ Ion Diaconescu was convinced that a Constitutional Monarchy was the best system to support Romania's 'deficient' democracy.⁶⁷⁸ Ion Ratiu had a close personal relationship with the royal family.⁶⁷⁹ But even the pro-democracy campaigners in the civil society groups affiliated to the Convention backed the setting up of a constitutional monarchy, again seeing Spain as the model to follow.⁶⁸⁰

Michael Hohenzollern had abdicated as King of Romania in 1947, leaving the country for exile in Switzerland. On 26th December 1989, Michael attempted to return to Romania for the first time since his abdication but he was refused entry by the government. A series of subsequent attempts were made to persuade the government to grant Michael a visa but it wasn't until the Easter of 1992 that he was allowed to visit the country.⁶⁸¹ The event dominated the media over the period of the visit and for some time after it too putting the restitution question back onto the political agenda.⁶⁸² With a republican constitution having been endorsed overwhelmingly just a few months before, this cannot have been

⁶⁷⁴ See Siani-Davies, *Revolution*, Chapter 6

⁶⁷⁵ Vrabiescu Kleckner, page 25. Kleckner was a Presidential Counsellor to Emil Constantinescu and a leading figure in the World Union of Free Romanians, the association of Romanian exiles based in the United States.

⁶⁷⁶ Interview with Valerian Stan.

⁶⁷⁷ The constitution was supported by 8.5 million voters with just 2.2 million against. Preda and Soare, page 34.

⁶⁷⁸ Diaconescu, *Revolutie*, page 216.

⁶⁷⁹ See Ratiu, various references.

⁶⁸⁰ Interview with Valerian Stan.

⁶⁸¹ Diaconescu, *Revolutie*, pp 101 - 105

⁶⁸² Romania Libera devoted extensive coverage to the event including speculation that Michael would return as monarch in the future.

helpful to the Convention.⁶⁸³ The king played a further, perhaps unwitting, part in the electoral campaign at the end of July. The leaders of the Convention embarked upon a West European tour to reinforce their image as the anointed standard bearers of the centre-right in Romania.⁶⁸⁴ Radu Campeanu's National Liberals, who by this stage had left the Convention, chose this moment to announce that they had approached King Michael to be their presidential candidate although whether the king was aware of the approach before the media were is unclear.⁶⁸⁵

Convention politicians perceived that the formation was damaged by their support for the monarchy. The possible reintroduction of the monarchy is not specifically mentioned in their 1992 election manifesto but as late as the 1996 campaign, Ion Iliescu's campaign resurrected the issue. As Gallagher points out, Constantinescu was quick to rule out a referendum after he himself had assumed office.⁶⁸⁶ Yet, less than six months earlier, Constantinescu had told an audience of émigrés in America that he admired the King and that if parliament willed a referendum which resulted in the restoration of the monarchy, he would be honoured to hand over power.⁶⁸⁷ Because of this continued willingness to contemplate a restitution of the monarchy, for the first seven years of its existence, Romania's leading Communist successor party was able to attack the centre-right as a threat to democracy because of its constitutional views.

Other aspects of democratic development raised potentially significant questions. How should the parties contribute to the consolidation of democratic state institutions? How should Romania's newly sovereign demos respond to the prospect of ceding some of its power to the European Union? How should local government structures accommodate the needs of a country with a substantial and geographically concentrated ethnic minority? How should a liberal democracy respond to the threat of electoral success for illiberal movements such as ultra-nationalism.

⁶⁸³ See chapter 2 above.

⁶⁸⁴ Conventia Democratica partener European, *Romania Libera* 28 July 1992, page 1.

⁶⁸⁵ Bomba liberala, *Romania Libera*, 30 July 1992, page 1.

⁶⁸⁶ Gallagher, *Theft*, pp. 148 – 149.

⁶⁸⁷ Vrabiescu Klechner, page 45.

Thus, competing democratic discourses represented a significant political dividing line in Romania during the 1990s with the centre-right constrained in its ability to exploit the issue by the nature of the transition and its historic loyalties to the royal family. Internal conflict over the issue of the monarchy, though, was limited since the Convention was largely united in its position. The Hungarian Democratic Union, who might have been expected to resist sentimentalism for the pre-war Greater Romanian settlement, did not contribute significantly to the debate. The National Liberals and the Civic Alliance were less strident than the National Peasants but were still supportive of the monarchy. The two strongest advocates of a restoration – Ion Ratiu and Ion Diaconescu – were at least willing to tolerate the Convention’s pragmatic abandonment of firm commitments on restoration (or even a referendum on the issue) once they were in power.

6.6 A Christian Democracy? Religion and the Church in politics

The politics of Christian Democracy became an integral part of the identity of the National Peasant Party following its admission to the international umbrella organisation Christian Democrat International in 1987.⁶⁸⁸ Corneliu Coposu made clandestine contact with Jean-Marie Daillet, vice president of the Christian Democrat International, when the French politician was visiting Romania and he requested that the National Peasants be admitted to the group based on its historical commitment to Christian Democrat values. The move was initiated as a means of securing international credibility for the party but it subsequently assimilated key Christian Democrat tenets into its ideology as it sought to modernise its programme.⁶⁸⁹

Despite Coposu’s strong personal faith, the National Peasants rejected the notion that they were a clerical party and defined Christian Democracy as encompassing ‘real democracy’ (guarantees of fundamental freedoms, property rights, political pluralism and participation);

⁶⁸⁸ National Peasant Party, *PNTCD Serving Romania*. Christian Democracy is taken to mean the West European model of Christian Democracy pursued by parties of that name in Germany, Italy and Scandinavia etc that were characterised by being broad-based parties that positioned themselves to the right of centre on key issues such as the economy, international relations and social policy while generally rejecting more strident conservative or neo-liberal outlooks. See the works on European Christian Democracy cited in chapter two above.

⁶⁸⁹ Corneliu Coposu, *In Memoriam*. Coposu talks of ‘consolidating the European Christian Democrat family’ by adding a representative of the Orthodox faith and of the fact that most of the Christian Democrat parties in Western Europe were in power at the time - ‘we wanted to be part of that union’.

Christian morals (social solidarity, mutual respect and opposition to fundamentalism) and an socio-economic system based on partnership, work and shared welfare.⁶⁹⁰

The 1992 election manifesto of the Democratic Convention gave early mention to the Church and a desire to re-integrate the institution into the life and politics of the country as part of a programme to reconstruct the country on a moral basis.⁶⁹¹ Throughout the post-Communist period there has been an on-going debate about the role of Church figures in politics but research suggests that although ‘priest-politicians’ have been elected under various party banners, they were drawn more to the Social Democrats (because of their strength in local government) and to the radical right (because of its appeals based on a return to hierarchy, nation and Christian morals) than to the parties of the centre-right.⁶⁹²

The use of religious symbolism in political appeals has occurred across the political spectrum and leading politicians have often been keen to stress the influence of Christianity over their political beliefs.⁶⁹³ But the explicit use of religious imagery and appeals has generally been more common among politicians on the far right. Lavinia Stan indicates a hardening of opposition to the left among the Church leadership after 2000 (she also points to a significant triumph for Democratic Convention presidential candidate Emil Constantinescu in 1996 when he challenged Ion Iliescu directly to say whether he believed in God) but a political cleavage based on competing views of religion and secularism is difficult to discern.⁶⁹⁴

In 1996, Tepelea stressed the foremost importance of a ‘rebirth of Christian morality’ in human relationships before economic reforms could be expected to benefit the nation. Political reforms – of the justice system; guaranteeing freedom of information; and re-organising local administration were closely linked to achieving this objective.⁶⁹⁵

⁶⁹⁰ *The National Peasant Christian Democratic Party* (leaflet published in 2001).

⁶⁹¹ Democratic Convention, *Platforma – Program 1992*, pp. 3 – 6.

⁶⁹² Lavinia Stan, *Pulpits, Ballots and Party Cards: Religion and Elections in Romania*, Religion, State and Society, vol. 33, no. 4, December 2005, pp. 347 – 366.

⁶⁹³ In 1994, for example, former Prime Minister Petre Roman, a modernising social democrat by instinct whose father had been a leading member of the Communist era apparatus, claims his Christian beliefs were crystallised on the night of 21/22 December 1989 as he witnessed the spirit and faith of the Bucharest revolutionaries. Petre Roman, *Romania Incotro?*, page 61.

⁶⁹⁴ Lavinia Stan, *Pulpits*.

⁶⁹⁵ National Peasant Party, *Pe Acelasi Drum*, pp 15-16.

Again, though, as with the issue of the monarchy, the potential for internal division within the Convention was avoided by the pragmatism of its members. There were no discernable secularist ideologues in any part of Romania's political spectrum. The Church and its political adherents did not challenge the constitutional settlement and while religious figures spoke up in debates over restitution of property for example it did not engage in the active mobilisation of the congregation into the political sphere. The lack of a significant political division over religion is no doubt partly due to the dominance of a single church – Romanian Orthodoxy – within society and the fact that it did not act as a focus for opposition to the regime in the Communist era as the Catholic Church in Poland did. Radical liberal groups have defended the Church as partners in suffering during the Communist years and framed their values in terms of the defence of the freedom of individuals to practice their religion in accordance with their conscience.⁶⁹⁶ Conservative politicians, seeking a return to traditional values went further in asserting that the Orthodox Church was the 'spiritual leader of the Romanian people' and demanding the affirmation of Christian morals.⁶⁹⁷

Religion forms an element of the national question because of the close affiliation of the churches of the Hungarian community to the Hungarian Democratic Union. The Catholic and Calvinist Churches were excluded from the accommodation reached between the Communist state and the Orthodox Church while the Greco-Roman Uniate Church was actively persecuted. Restitution of property to these institutions became a significant element in minority politics.⁶⁹⁸ The link between religion and politics in the ethnic Hungarian community took on more personalised symbolism too with the continued involvement of Bishop Laszlo Tokes in radical politics.⁶⁹⁹

The lack of resonance of religion as a dividing line in Romanian politics meant Christian Democracy remained a rather elusive concept. It did not evolve beyond sloganising

⁶⁹⁶ Partidul Liberal 1993, *Manifestul Liberal*.

⁶⁹⁷ Uniunea Fortelor Drepte, *Manifestul dreptei*, points 7 and 8.

⁶⁹⁸ Interview with Csaba Takacs. Cluj

⁶⁹⁹ For more on the central role of Tokes in the revolution of 1989, see Peter Siani-Davies, *Romanian Revolution*. In the European Parliament elections of November 2007, the Hungarian Democratic Union responded to the threat posed by his independent candidacy by promoting Calvinist priest and radical nationalist Csaba Sogor to a leading position on their list of candidates. Interview with Csaba Sogor, Brussels, June 2008.

appeals for the adoption of a Christian ethic in politics and government. A group of five leading National Peasants interviewed in the wake of the party's disastrous defeat in the 2000 elections all referred to the need for the party to promote a Christian Democrat vision, but there was little attempt to define that vision more clearly. Indeed, two of the interviewees offer rather contradictory notions of Christian Democracy with Tudor Dunca suggesting the party should base its appeal on traditional values of family and authority while Radu Sarbu picked out decentralisation and individual liberty.⁷⁰⁰

So, while Christian values – and in particular Christian Democracy – became an important part of the identity of the National Peasant Party, there was no resistance internally to its assimilation into the language and appeals of the Convention. Yet, at the same time, Romania's relative religious homogeneity and the lack of a strong secular tradition meant that there was little differentiation across the political spectrum on the issue of religion and so relatively little political traction to be gained from it.

6.7 Towards a Convention ideology?

So while the standpoints of the key Convention members did not appear to create significant barriers to ideological cohesion, was there a conscious attempt to craft a distinct ideological position for the Convention itself?

The civil society groups that were members of the Convention were potentially the best engine for defining its ideological positioning thanks to their moderating role and refusal to play a direct role in electoral politics. The Association of Former Political Prisoners was influential in radicalising the Convention's opposition to any signs of 'continuing Communism'.⁷⁰¹ The World Union of Free Romanians had influential links with the royal family and promoted a pro-monarchist line within the Convention. But the Civic Alliance was the most influential group, helping to craft a civic liberal identity for the Democratic Convention.⁷⁰²

⁷⁰⁰ Special Report on the National Peasant Party Congress, *Romania Libera*, 13 January 2001.

⁷⁰¹ Pavel and Huiu, page 114.

⁷⁰² As mentioned in chapter three, the Civic Alliance set up a Civic Academy to develop policy ideas and while the Alliance published a number of detailed policy papers it is not clear how substantial was the

The Civic Alliance's founding declaration was published in November 1990.⁷⁰³ It warned that Romania was in danger of sinking into chaos and barbarism and asserted that the country needed 'truth as well as bread'. It supported 'radical, realistic reform' to avoid the grave situation that the country faced. Its priorities were based around the creation of a functioning democracy, the protection of civil liberties, an end to intolerance, corruption and 'egoism', the creation of a free press and the assurance of the right of association. The development of a strong civil society was essential to achieving these aims.

Between the elections of 1992 and 1996, the Convention suffered a series of internal disputes, some of which contained an ideological element. By 1996 there was a recognition that the Convention needed to modernise – and moderate – its political programme if it was to secure the support of a broader electorate.⁷⁰⁴ During September the Convention campaign paid particular attention to issues affecting rural Romania (perhaps timed to coincide with the harvest) with a series of announcements and election rallies in the rural south and east of the country.⁷⁰⁵ The list of pledges made a tempting offer, including increased peasant pensions, accelerated restitution of agricultural property, delaying of agricultural taxes and increased access to credit for farmers.⁷⁰⁶

On 27th October, the Convention launched its "Contract with Youth" at a concert in Bucharest.⁷⁰⁷ Promising 'twelve solutions for the twelfth hour', the Contract made a series of commitments covering economic, housing and health policies plus promises of investment in education infrastructure.⁷⁰⁸ The following day, Constantinescu toured industrial areas including the state-run Sidex steel works and promised state aid for 'strategic' industries.⁷⁰⁹ Each of these specific programmes was drawn from the Contract

Academy's role in the Democratic Convention's ideological development. The drivers appeared to be more personalised (in terms of the influence of individual leaders) and representational (in terms of the enduring significance of the Timisoara Declaration).

⁷⁰³ Civic Alliance, *Declaratia de Principii*, Bucharest, 1990, accessed online 29 July 2008 at <http://www.aliantacivica.ro/documente/Declaratia%20de%20Principii%20-%206%20noiembrie%201990.htm>

⁷⁰⁴ Interview with Zoe Petre.

⁷⁰⁵ Emil Constantinescu a semnat "Contractul cu satul romanesc", *Romania Libera*, 6 September 1996, page 3; Intoarcele la problemele reale ale satului romanesc, *Romania Libera*, 26 September 1996, page 3.

⁷⁰⁶ Un om cu frica lui Dumnezeu, *Romania Libera*, 5 September 1996, page 3.

⁷⁰⁷ Contractul cu tinerii, *Romania Libera*, 24 October 1996, page 2.

⁷⁰⁸ Contract cu tanara generatie, *Romania Libera*, 28 October 1996, page 2.

⁷⁰⁹ Reabilitarea industriei grele o prioritate pentru Emil Constantinescu si CDR, *Romania Libera*, 28 October 1996, page 3.

with Romania which had been launched in November 1995 and which had been consciously modeled on the US Republican Party's Contract with America which was seen as delivering success for that party in the 1994 Congressional elections. The Contract was a new form of manifesto which promised action in the first 200 days of a Convention administration.

The first of the Contract's twenty pledges promised the rapid restitution of property. The next seven points made specific pledges to benefit peasant farmers, students, young families and pensioners. Other pledges related to increased maternity benefits, tax cuts and investment in infrastructure improvements (such as improved street lighting in towns).⁷¹⁰ Most striking is the move away from the civic concerns of the early period of the Convention's existence. Administrative reform aimed at tackling corruption is mentioned but the anti-Communist rhetoric of the early 1990s has been sidelined. Only the restitution of property retains its place of primacy as the programme seeks to connect with the direct economic concerns of voters rather than focus on constitutional issues and de-Communisation which perhaps matter more to the metropolitan elite. None of this suggests a reversal of earlier commitments or that the Convention's new programme contradicted its earlier positioning. But the change of emphasis does, perhaps, go some way to setting the scene for the early disappointment felt by the more radical groups within the Convention whose expectations of the 1996 government had been framed by their activism in the early phase of development of the democratic opposition.

By the end of its existence, the Convention appeared to have a coherent enough centre-right ideology and the Democratic Convention 2000 identified itself explicitly as existing on the centre-right of politics. Its fundamental values were familiar: belief in God, democracy, property, the free market, tolerance, national dignity. As well as defending the out-going government's record on economic stabilisation, privatisation and restitution of property the Convention 2000's programme gave greater prominence to the pursuit of integration into the European Union.⁷¹¹ The formation's priorities had changed over time but by 2000 the Convention had been reduced to little more than the National Peasant Party and some

⁷¹⁰ Democratic Convention, *Contractul cu Romania*, Bucharest, November 1995.

⁷¹¹ CDR-2000: o alianta politica tanara si puternica, *Romania Libera*, 1 November 2000, page 3.

fellow-travelling micro-parties (see chapter three above) so the significance of ideological cohesion by this point in its history is at the very least questionable.

Andrei Marga perhaps came closest to setting out a vision of a Convention ideology in his 1999 review of education reforms. Marga had been recruited as a technocrat and, although he joined the National Peasants and went on to lead the party after it fell from power, he did not have the deep ties to the party that other, older, leaders did:

A coalition of political forces with their roots in classic liberalism (with its ideas of individual liberty, a free market, political pluralism etc) remains the solution in Romania... Christian Democracy, claiming for itself the territory that emerged from classic liberalism, can be – with the help of its principles of attachment to liberty, the market, a healthy political centre, subsidiarity, respect for the law, solidarity – bound to the major currents and synthesize the subjects necessary in today's Romania.⁷¹²

Marga is one of the very few Convention politicians who openly contemplated the creation of a new party that unified the National Peasants and the National Liberals but during the 1990s he was a marginal figure. The one politician who could have affected the creation of a distinct Convention identity was its two-time presidential candidate Emil Constantinescu. There are two broad notions that are most closely identified with Constantinescu: returning Romania to the European mainstream; and the need to recast Romanian society via some form of moral crusade.

6.8 Return to the West

The notion that the revolutions of 1989 represented a 'return to Western Europe' for the states of the CEE region was a widespread theme, particularly among dissident intellectuals. In the Romanian case the idea was particularly resonant, perhaps because of a sense of a distance further to travel. As early as the summer of 1990, Mircea Ionescu-Quintus, Vice President of the National Liberal Party, was prepared to support co-operation

⁷¹² Newspaper article published in February 1999 and quoted in Andrei Marga, *Iesirea din trecut*, Alma Mater, Cluj, 2002, pp. 26 – 27.

with the National Salvation Front in the form of a joint parliamentary delegation to the Council of Europe to show that Romania, "...was, is and must be a European country."⁷¹³

Criticism of the Ceausescu regime was commonly framed in terms of his preference for dragging the country further to the East and consequently towards the Third World. The 'Letter of Six' had criticised Ceausescu's policies for wishing to drag Romania backwards into Asia.⁷¹⁴ Andrei Marga is one of the few political practitioners on the centre right who has attempted to publish a body of works setting out his political philosophy, refers to 'Oriental Socialism', clearly linking both the Ceausescu regime and Iliescu's Social Democrats. For him, entering NATO and the EU were the two main projects for 'reformers' (a description he tends to use in preference to 'centre right' or similar labels). Promotion of the rule of law, democracy and the market economy were important not solely as ends in themselves but because they were gateways to the larger objective of international acceptance.⁷¹⁵

Ionescu-Quintus's statement above is an indication of the fear, referred to by David Phinnemore, that Romania risked being stranded in a 'grey zone' between Western Europe, Russia and Asia.⁷¹⁶ This fear was compounded by Romania's early lack of progress in moves to integrate with the EU – its exclusion from the PHARE programme and from trade agreements in the early part of 1990 for example – caused by Western reaction to events in Targu Mures, the Mineriada and the lack of rapid economic reform.⁷¹⁷

Some progress was made by the Social Democrat-led government after 1992: in October 1993, the European Parliament ratified an association accord with Romania and in May 1994, Romania was given Associate Partner status by the EU.⁷¹⁸ But there was an awareness that the country was lagging behind its neighbours in developing relations with the west. Progress in normalising relations with Hungary and the Ukraine were important steps towards securing NATO and EU membership but a bilateral agreement with Hungary

⁷¹³ Reported in *Romania Libera*, 1 July 1990.

⁷¹⁴ Siani-Davies, *Revolution*, pp 27 – 28.

⁷¹⁵ Interview with Andrei Marga, leader of the National Peasant Party 2001 – 2002 and education minister, 1996 – 2000, Cluj, January 2009.

⁷¹⁶ Phinnemore, page 39

⁷¹⁷ Phinnemore, page 39

⁷¹⁸ Stan Stoica, *Dupa* '89, pp. 65 – 69.

was not signed until August 1996.⁷¹⁹ A treaty with the Ukraine followed in June 1997 after Emil Constantinescu had been elected president.⁷²⁰

The integration of Romania into the western world via membership of transnational structures was a key element of the Convention's identity and became particularly associated with its leader, President Emil Constantinescu. Constantinescu makes his own commitment clear:

I pledged myself that, whether I was going to become president or not, I would do after the elections of November 1996, all my best to dispel the suspicions about the authenticity of this country's option for her integration into NATO and the EU.⁷²¹

The commitment of Constantinescu, and of the wider Convention, to this ideal was tested to extremes in the late 1990s with NATO's response to the Kosovo crisis.

At the end of 1998, Romania's case for admission to NATO was shaken by criticism of the country's progress towards reform from within the United States' administration.⁷²²

Gallagher sees the administration's willingness to support NATO action against Yugoslavia in this context but whether or not this was the case, the events that followed brought intense domestic political pressure upon the government which its decision to resist indicates its commitment to the ideal of integration with Euro-Atlantic structures.

In mid April, Romania denied Russia the use of its airspace for flights to Belgrade and granted NATO unrestricted access. For once there was unity among the coalition partners, including the Democrats. The opposition – the Social Democrats, the Romanian National Unity Party and the Alliance for Romania – all opposed free access for NATO flights.⁷²³

The government also backed the oil embargo on Yugoslavia despite the potential for damage to the Romanian economy, a situation made worse by the NATO destruction of the

⁷¹⁹ The far left and the far right opposed the treaty in parliament and they were joined – for different reasons – by the Hungarian Democratic Union and the National Liberal Party – Democratic Convention. *Reactie in lant la Tratatul romano-ungar, Romania Libera*, 19 August 1996, page 3.

⁷²⁰ Stan Stoica, *Dupa '89*, page 99.

⁷²¹ Constantinescu, page 313.

⁷²² The criticism came from Deputy Secretary of State Strobe Talbott. Gallagher, *Theft*, page 214.

⁷²³ See Constantinescu, pp. 173 – 176.

Danube bridges which closed a key route for Romanian trade.⁷²⁴ Economic considerations were added to sentimental attachments to Serbia as an historic ally of Romania and to fears of an influx of Kosovan refugees to undermine public support for the action.

Leading figures unite in the view that the singular success of the Constantinescu presidency was to bring Romania back into the orbit of the Euro-Atlantic institutions. And they point to the government's stance on the NATO action against Yugoslavia in response to the Kosovo conflict as a key indicator.⁷²⁵ The domestic political cost, though, was substantial, as Constantinescu himself ruefully noted:

Soon after Yugoslavia is first bombed, confidence in the President, and to a lesser extent, the pro-NATO and pro-EU options decrease dramatically. After the end of the conflict, the options in favour of NATO and the EU recover. The 20% plunge in the President's popularity has never been recovered.⁷²⁶

Initially at least, the debate over the country's place in the world appeared to offer a real division in Romania's politics. Briefly, after the fall of Communism, there was a sense that the new government might pursue an East-oriented foreign policy but this was effectively ended with the failure of the Moscow Coup in August 1991 and the subsequent break-up of the Soviet Union.

Yugoslavia was a long standing regional partner of Romania and economic ties between the two states were close. The political costs of support for NATO were considerable but it was seen as a totemic gesture in the bid to gain acceptance for Romania within the wider international community. By the end of the 1990s all the main parties supported NATO and EU membership but it was the *actions* of the Constantinescu government which were seen as opening the doors and which set it apart from the seemingly more reluctant conversion of the social democrats and the far right.

⁷²⁴ Pavel and Huiu, page 367.

⁷²⁵ Zoe Petre, Andrei Marga, former finance minister Daniel Daianu and Varujan Vosganian all made similar points in interviews – that Constantinescu's support for NATO on the issue was good for the country in the long-run but had disastrous consequences in terms of popular support for the government. It is interesting to note that Petre claims the support of the Democrat Party (which provided the foreign minister in the government) was crucial in sustaining the policy.

⁷²⁶ Constantinescu, page 160.

6.9 The moral crusade: the transformation of state and society

The sense that the opposition was engaged on a moral crusade ran through the core of the Convention's message and suffused Emil Constantinescu's language in particular as has been referred to throughout this thesis.

In 1992, following Constantinescu's selection as presidential candidate, the Convention began to set out its appeal to the electorate. Constantinescu himself presented his campaign as a moral crusade aimed at transforming the outlook of Romanian citizens.⁷²⁷ At the beginning of August the Convention issued a summary of its offer to voters under the title, "The Romania that we wish for". Its stated priorities were:

1. Guaranteed change to be assured by laws and changes to state institutions.
2. The lives of citizens will be at the centre of the reconstruction of society
3. A stable economy that will ensure a decent standard of living for everyone
4. That Romania would return to its national and European destiny⁷²⁸

The first heading dealt with constitutional affairs – itself a clear indicator of where the Convention's priorities lay. It called for Romania to be run on the basis of a 'state of law' with the separation of powers between the legislature, the executive and the judiciary. Parliament should be freely elected and the president should fulfil the role of moderator. It called for administrative reform covering the Church, the army and local government and for educational reforms to rediscover Romania's national and European spirit. The second heading dealt with the need to reconstruct civil society to create a social life independent of the state. Equality of opportunity would underpin a moral society and the pursuit of a market economy should not be equated to unscrupulous individualism.

The Convention's economic platform was built on the market economy but it called for reforms to be built upon the opening of a national dialogue involving government, businesses, the Trades Unions and political parties. It called for property rights to be

⁷²⁷ Esenta campaniei mele electorale va fi idea de politica morala, *Romania Libera*, 15 July 1992, page 3.

⁷²⁸ Romania pe care o dorim, *Romania Libera*, 5 August 1992, page 3.

guaranteed, restitution of property, market and credit reforms to encourage domestic investment and the opening of markets to foreign investors. At the same time it demanded (unspecified) measures of social protection.

In some ways the final heading was the most interesting since it set out a distinctive and moderate position for the Convention on the question of national borders that was consistent with its demand for the domestic rule of law and a desire to return to the European mainstream. It called for peace and stability in south east Europe and the respect for political, religious and ethnic minorities at home. It sought stable relations with the Republic of Moldova on the basis of national reconciliation, noting that any change to Romania's borders must be subject to international mediation and approval:

National reconciliation must be realised in a spirit of truth and justice but also in tolerance and Christian beliefs.⁷²⁹

In 1996 the fight against Communism remained central to the personality and programme of the Convention but the mechanism for freeing Romania from the continuing influence of Communism was technocratic:

How do we change this situation? [the state of the country] With the Contract with Romania which was created on the basis of the study of thousands of pages containing hundreds of thousands of data..., containing clear and concrete proposals with a precise timetable and for which I assume personal responsibility. Who will put these proposals into practice? With 15,000 people who were ready to help with the economic programme...⁷³⁰

The pledge to draft in thousands of non-partisan technocrats was driven by the conviction that the state bureaucracy had been captured by the supporters of the former regime. And once in government the most disastrous turnaround in public attitudes was the confidence the public had in the Convention's ability to tackle corruption. In March 1997, 63% of voters felt the Convention government would be able to tackle corruption. By the end of its

⁷²⁹ Romania pe care o dorim, *Romania Libera*, 5 August 1992, page 3.

⁷³⁰ Emil Constantinescu addressing a meeting of Romanian émigrés in New York on 3rd February 1996. Vrabiescu-Klechner, *op cit* p.37.

term in office in November 2000, that figure had collapsed to just 4%.⁷³¹ Tackling corruption was a key litmus test in itself but it was also an important proxy for popular attitudes to the evolving economic environment. There was a widespread sense that many ordinary voters were suffering the effects of the economic reforms but that a privileged minority were getting rich unfairly thanks to corrupt privatisations.⁷³² Low grade corruption, too, sapped public confidence in the new order and this problem was magnified by perception more than experience as the government lost momentum and control of the agenda.⁷³³ This, of course, made the problem even harder to resolve since to an extent the public appears to have formed its view of corruption based on external information rather than their own day to day contacts with officials, so the impact of any actual progress in tackling corruption would be likely to be diffuse.

By 1999 the government's credibility had fallen to such an extent that it fell victim to what virtually amounted to an attempted coup. Miron Cozma led Jiu Valley miners in a protest march on Bucharest. This sixth *mineriada* did not just challenge the authority of Constantinescu and the Convention, it challenged the authority of the institutions of government. Constantinescu himself records how, on 20th January 1999, Miron Cozma called not just for the government's resignation but for the establishment of Revolutionary Councils in its place. It was almost a month later that the miners were finally disarmed and Cozma arrested.⁷³⁴ The first months of 1999 were intensely difficult for the government. On top of the miners' protests and the pressures of the NATO action in Yugoslavia (see above), unions called General Strike in April and business leaders also announced a one-

⁷³¹ Gallup Romania, *op cit*. The figures for whether voters felt the government was capable of tackling corruption changed from 63% saying yes and 28% saying no in March 1997 to 4% yes and 88% no in November 2000.

⁷³² Pop quotes a CURS survey from June 1998 which showed that 66% of people felt that privatisations were most often dishonest. Only 9% felt that the Romanian population gained the most from privatisations and only 2% identified workers as the main beneficiaries. Pop 2006.

⁷³³ Liliana Pop quotes research by Alina Mungiu-Pipidi which identifies a significant gap between perception and experience of corruption among public officials. She also refers to a World Bank study which showed just 11% of households and 27% of firms based their views of corruption on direct experience with public officials while the influence of the mass media was far more significant. Pop, 2006.

⁷³⁴ Constantinescu, page 150.

day strike, protesting against Constantinescu's refusal to dismiss the government and replace it with a technocratic administration to be led by prominent businessmen.⁷³⁵

Constantinescu tried to recover some stability and credibility for the government with the dismissal of Radu Vasile as prime minister and his replacement with National Bank governor Mugur Isarescu but a continuing string of crises and scandals undermined Isarescu's efforts. In the early 1990s the opposition paid little attention to the importance of state building: as discussed in chapter two, attacks on the government were more likely to challenge its legitimacy to govern than the outcome of its policies. It could be argued that this delegitimising discourse allowed the same tone of debate to continue when the Convention was in government and thus set the scene for Cozma's challenge to government authority. Mugur Isarescu was marked out for his commitment to developing the credibility of state institutions. Both Emil Constantinescu and Zoe Petre tell similar stories of being impressed by early signs of Mugur Isarescu's commitment to state building. Zoe Petre goes as far as to say he was the only person she heard talking of the importance of constructing state institutions with broad support from the political class in the wake of the collapse of the Ceausescu regime.⁷³⁶

The 'moral crusade' linked many elements of the Convention's thinking: internationalism and ethnic toleration, economic liberalisation and attempts to tackle corruption. In particular it aimed its message at a new generation whose attitudes had not been shaped by Communism. In the field of education policy for example a junior education minister in the Vasile government, Mircea Corneliu Fronescu, suggests that the thrust of reforms was to create a system aimed at producing a flexible education, personalised to the individual.⁷³⁷ Virgil Petrescu describes the priorities he pursued during his ministerial tenure: decentralising decision making to reduce the role of the ministry; changing the allocation of places in high schools to make the system more equitable; the allocation of financial support to half a million of the poorest students to help pay for food, clothes and school materials; the construction of 1100 new schools; the construction of a dual language (Romanian and Hungarian) school campus at Baia Mare and the construction of the first

⁷³⁵ Constantinescu, page 242.

⁷³⁶ Interview with Zoe Petre.

⁷³⁷ National Peasant Party, *Pe Acelasi Drum*, pp. 74-78.

Ukrainian language school in the country at Sighet.⁷³⁸ The approach of Andrei Marga, Petrescu's successor as Education minister, was even more explicitly political - he sees his achievements in education reform as one part of the broad modernisation agenda.⁷³⁹

Yet the organisational structure of the Convention meant the member parties resisted fusion and Constantinescu lacked the will, vision or motivation to create a distinct political entity out of the Convention itself. The issues that Constantinescu himself prioritised were important but were not sufficient to drive the formation of an integrative centre-right narrative for the Convention and the most salient policy issues remained located in the identities of the constituent members of the formation.

6.10 Conclusion

The absence of a Communist-era dissident movement in Romania meant that domestic political thinking on the right had not established roots before the overthrow of the Ceausescu regime in December 1989. Instead, the re-formed historic parties mined their pre-Communist pasts for an ideological identity. This led to an exaggeration of political differences between the two main parties – the National Peasants and the National Liberals – despite their broadly similar ideological stances.

Anti-Communism was the essential glue that united the 'democratic opposition' into the Democratic Convention after the decision of the National Salvation Front to establish itself as a political party. But the strength of the opposition leaders' attachment to anti-Communist rhetoric left it vulnerable in the face of an electorate which had a more pragmatic outlook. The Convention leaders were slow to learn the lessons of their early defeats. Norris and Lovenduski, in examining the heavy defeat of the British Conservative Party in 2001, have suggested that failures of perception on the part of political actors can contribute to their defeat. Politicians misinterpret the stance of the voters on key issues as the Conservatives appear to have done in relation to European integration and taxation policy in 2001 – it was not that a wilful positioning far to the right of the median voter

⁷³⁸ Interview with Virgil Petrescu, May 2008.

⁷³⁹ Andrei Marga, *Anii Reformei*.

took place, rather than those crafting the Conservative position thought the voters were further to the right than they actually were.⁷⁴⁰

Norris and Lovenduski do not suggest reasons why this failure of perception might have arisen beyond a form of electoral myopia caused by ideological barriers but, translated into the Romanian context, many in the Convention were implacably anti-Communist and this may well have led them to assume that the wider electorate shared their sense of political priorities. Leading National Liberal Valeriu Stoica claims that the National Peasants in particular were wedded to an outdated version of politics that divided only on Communist/anti Communist lines. Even in 2000 they replayed this division despite Stoica's pleas to change the mode of debate.⁷⁴¹

This argument over the classification Communist/anti-Communist, emotional, without a clear political programme, without a clear political vision created a success in 1996 but the absence of a programme, of a political vision, of coherence also explains the collapse of the government from 1996 to 2000.⁷⁴²

The strength of anti-Communist sentiment was also a source of tension within the Convention between pragmatists and fundamentalists – initially between the National Peasants and the National Liberals but later, in government, between those who sought more radical lustration measures (mainly in and around the Civic Alliance) and those prepared to compromise with former Frontists to retain power. Once in office, policies which would have indicated a resolute ideological commitment to anti-Communism were not followed through and this effectively ended the Convention as an electoral force as its more radical supporters abandoned it. However, this division was late in the Convention's story and the earlier split between the National Liberals and the National Peasants was perhaps more manufactured than organic – indicating that any ideological divisions over attitudes to Communism could have been overcome if there had been a greater will to create a more deeply integrated formation.

⁷⁴⁰ Pippa Norris and Joni Lovenduski, *Why Parties Fail to Learn: Electoral Defeat, Selective Perception and British Party Politics*, Party Politics, 2004, volume 10, number 1, pp. 85-104.

⁷⁴¹ Valeriu Stoica, *Provocari*, page 41.

⁷⁴² Valeriu Stoica, *Provocari*, page 38.

Economic reform was a further important part of the Convention's ideological make up. Both the National Peasant Party and the leadership of the National Liberals took a cautious approach to liberalisation and proponents of 'shock therapy' were few in number. This pragmatism was followed through into government actions but while clearly some were frustrated by the pace of economic reform this became more of a proxy for other issues (relating to lustration, corruption and frustrated personal ambition). The historic Social Democratic Party did quit the Convention ahead of the 1996 elections and economic/social policy differences may have played a part in this decision but this ought to have created a greater cohesion in the Convention's position allowing it to operate comfortably on the centre right. On the significant issues of privatisation and restitution of property, the Convention parties were united and their policy position was clearly distinct from that of their opponents.

The role of the nation plays an interesting part in defining the Convention's ideological identity. The salience of anti-Communism helped to push the Hungarian Democratic Union into co-operation with the 'Romanian' parties that formed the Convention and this in turn helped to shape the Convention's attitude to nationalism. But the historic parties and the civic society groups were already pre-disposed to reject radical nationalism because of their liberal instincts in some cases and because of their recognition that moderation in this area was an important part of rehabilitating Romania into the western world. The Democratic Union of Hungarians' radicalism combined with pressures created by the nationalist rhetoric of the 1992 – 1996 government to eventually end the Democratic Union's membership of the Convention. But the Hungarian group maintained close links with the Convention which in turn resisted any temptation to turn to radical nationalism itself. It is arguable that the Convention's decision to take a moderate position in terms of nationalism made it easier for the extreme right to survive and prosper. The performance of the Greater Romania Party in 2000 prompted western commentators in particular to look back through Romania's post-Communist politics for signs of ethnic tension. But at the

same time more considered analysis found the causes of the far-right's success elsewhere.⁷⁴³

The secondary elements that went to make up the Convention's identity were not significant sources of internal division essentially because the member-groups were broadly united in their views. The National Peasants adopted Christian Democratic rhetoric but disavowed clericalism while at the same time neither the National Liberals nor the civic liberals adopted secularist positions. Inter-denominational divisions were secondary to ethnic identity in the divide between the Hungarian Democratic Union and the Romanian parties – perhaps because the Hungarian community itself was divided between Catholic and Calvinist faiths. Those who were determined to promote the primacy of the Orthodox Church gravitated towards the Social Democrats and the Greater Romania Party leaving the Convention broadly united in its outlook. The peculiar position that the centre-right found itself in with regards to democratisation was damaging to its electoral prospects but not a source of internal division. The Convention quietly abandoned its commitment to restoration of the monarchy over time and the more radical monarchists were obliged to accept this as the price of widening the formation's electoral base.

Having avoided the temptation of radical nationalism and being united in its determination to shed the country's Communist past, the Convention maintained a consistent position in respect of membership of Euro-Atlantic alliances. The Convention's fondness for technocratic solutions and for casting their appeal in terms of a moral crusade arise partly from the anti-party sentiments of some on the civic liberal wing of the formation but, despite these elements there is little sign of a deliberate construction of an ideology of the Convention beyond opposition to Communism. Equally, despite the perceptions of some of the formation's leadership, the ideological differences between the member parties can hardly be said to be so great as to cause a failure of the formation. Instead the principal causes of disunity appear to lay elsewhere.

⁷⁴³ Andreescu for example asserts that extremism is boosted by five factors: the weakness of the Romanian state in terms of policy delivery; popular mistrust of democracy; a lack of transparency; poverty; and corruption. While none of these is linked to inter-ethnic tension it is also true that each could be said to have been contributed to by policy failures in other areas made by the Convention. Gabriel Andreescu, *Right Wing Extremism in Romania*, Ethno-cultural Diversity Resource Centre, Cluj, 2003.

So, returning to the four questions that opened this chapter, it can be seen that the constituent organisations that made up the Convention did have coherent ideological positions. Those positions were not necessarily contradictory although tensions were created over the degree of salience attached to individual issues by the different member organisations (for example in relation to the Dumitrescu law).

The absence of a coherent, unified ideology (or even of a project to create one) for the Democratic Convention was seen by some as a significant brake on closer co-operation between the parties in the within it. Thus, one senior minister in the Convention-led government sees the Democratic Convention as:

...broad based with many factions, a complicated *modus operandi* and conflicting ideology. The Convention was about opposing the Social Democrats... no one had a political project for the Convention.⁷⁴⁴

Renate Weber, a leading civil society activist and president Emil Constantinescu's closest adviser, feels the formation's breadth meant it lacked a clear identity:

The Democratic Convention was too broad; too mixed; too many different ideologies; different levels of understanding of political reality. The Convention had no distinctive centre-right approaches. They did not try to support the middle class.⁷⁴⁵

Others, such as Zoe Petre, Varujan Vosganian, Andrei Marga and President Emil Constantinescu, do see a distinctive ideological framework guiding the Convention that went beyond simply opposing the post-Communist left. And this view is supported by examination of the statements of leading politicians and party documents which suggest that the Democratic Convention did possess the elements of an identifiable centre-right ideology. However, the relative *salience* of those issues to the wider electorate, and the differing attitudes to those key issues between the Convention's member parties, may offer a partial explanation of the Convention's failure to unite more effectively: Convention politicians tended to prioritise what they themselves saw as important without regard to the

⁷⁴⁴ Interview with Daniel Daianu, Brussels, June 2008.

⁷⁴⁵ Interview with Renate Weber, Brussels, June 2008.

electorate's priorities. The Convention's ideological choices also meant it was unable to monopolise the political space on the right thereby allowing competition to grow from the far right in particular but also making it more difficult to compete in the centre. Finally a failure of delivery on its core policy pledges (which were derived from its distinct centre-right identity) once the Convention was in government increased the centrifugal pressures which the Convention's organisational structure was unable to resist once election defeat loomed. The creation of a coherent ideological identity by the end of its time in office was not sufficient by that stage to hold the organisation together since key parties had already opted out calculating that they could better achieve their objectives by other routes.

Chapter 7: Conclusion

This chapter brings together the main conclusions reached in each of the preceding chapters. It goes on to compare those conclusions to the original propositions set out in chapter one to determine which has been confirmed and why. The chapter then draws out the broader implications of those conclusions and ends with some indications of how the research might be taken forward.

7.1 Summary of key findings

The first conclusion to be drawn from the analysis is that the narratives and organisation of the ‘democratic opposition’ were heavily influenced by the nature of Romania’s transition from Communism and that this had an enduring impact on the ability of the Democratic Convention to develop into a successful centre-right formation. This transition was, in part, shaped by the nature of the Communist regime itself and in particular the absence of pre-existing opposition structures but it was the events that followed immediately after the overthrow of Nicolae Ceausescu in December 1989 that had a more profound effect on the story of the Democratic Convention and the centre-right in Romania.

Romania lacked a functioning opposition cadre such as existed in Czechoslovakia and Poland and it lacked a generation of reform-oriented administrators as existed in Hungary. The speed and violence with which the Ceausescu regime was overthrown meant that those apparatchiks who were finally ready to move against the leadership were pitched into a popular revolution, emerging as its leaders thanks to those peculiar dynamics and the absence of a credible alternative opposition leadership outside of the Communist Party. The historic parties – the National Peasant Party, the National Liberal Party and the Social Democratic Party - were re-constituted in the last days of 1989 and became the de-facto leaders of the new opposition as disquiet grew about the nature of the transition. They were gradually joined in opposition by activists from the streets and longer term dissidents who became increasingly disillusioned with the new structures during January 1990, with the National Salvation Front becoming seen as a vehicle for continuing Communist power.

The events of January to June 1990 were particularly important. The violence with which the new regime countered opposition by using the miners to break up demonstrations, the decision of the Front to contest the May 1990 elections and the scale of the Front's victory in those elections which could only be comprehended by attributing it to electoral fraud all formed the mindset of the opposition in an enduring way. These events gave rise to a sense of weakness against a dominant National Salvation Front. The narrative of the 'stolen revolution' and the consequent questioning of the Front's legitimacy as a governing structure, and the radicalisation of the opposition's discourse which conflated the Communist regime, its instruments of repression (particularly the Securitate), the National Salvation Front and then the Social Democrats into a single organism, meant that its ousting became the dominant rationale behind moves towards co-operation across the opposition movement.

Henceforth, strategic political decisions were taken by leaders of the centre-right primarily in the context of their perception of an 'unfinished' revolution whose outcome had been 'stolen' from the true opponents of Communism – a viewpoint which magnified the significance of the contest over the revolution in the minds of opposition actors and which made co-operation across the divide (and coalition building) impossible for many to contemplate. This had a profound effect on their ability to shape strategy for the centre-right throughout the next decade and contributed to the acute problems they faced in government when forced to coalesce with a broader range of political partners; especially in their relations with the Democrats whose supporters should have formed part of the centre-right coalition that the Convention was trying to forge.

The centre-right parties felt themselves so weakened by the dominance of the Front, and their narrative was so radicalised by the belief that Communist power had been maintained after the revolution that the bulk of the elites opted for uneasy co-operation with each other (bolstered by forging close relationships with sympathetic non-party organisations) rather than ultimately healthier competition. Evidence from elsewhere in the CEE region, notably Hungary and the Czech Republic, suggests that competition between centre-right parties hones messages and skills and ultimately concentrates resources in such a way that the 'fittest' survive to dominate the centre-right political space. Those elites who opted for

competition strategies, such as the National Liberals loyal to Radu Campeanu, were pushed to the electoral margins because of the weight of resources invested in the co-operation project. This contrasts with the (ultimately successful) strategies pursued by Fidesz in Hungary and the Czech Civic Democrats, who established a dominant position on the centre-right in their countries after having defeated or absorbed competitors who existed in a similar political space.

The decision to establish the Democratic Convention in the particular organisational form chosen had a profound effect on the dynamics of centre right politics in an organisational sense. It locked in the civic society groups and it preserved the structures of the historic parties, protecting them from meaningful competition against each other until the 2000 election. It also led to management structures that shared out voting rights equally between the constituent formations regardless of size or true political strength. But this spreading of operational power also reinforced the perception of those competing with the National Peasant Party for a leading position that it – the National Peasant Party – had created a structure it could dominate by virtue of its links with the civil society organisations.

In the end, the close links with civil society organisations that appeared to be the great source of strength and legitimation for the Convention, turned out to be a significant cause of its organisational weakness. The non-party groups were excluded from direct participation in the structures of power in government, they were alienated by the need to form coalitions and they were driven by policy objectives that did not fit the more pragmatic concerns of the other elites in the Convention who prioritised access to office and the benefits that could be derived from holding government positions. And since the internal dynamics of the formation meant that the leadership role was passed to a non-party figure in preference to one with strong links to one of the two main parties the emphasis on non party-building objectives became more significant. Emil Constantinescu's description of the enduring political legacy of the Convention is instructive in that it confirms his view that the Convention succeeded because of its delivery of policy priorities despite its destruction as a political force (see chapter six).

Although no serious attempt was made to develop an integrative ideological narrative in the way that the Czech Civic Democrats and Hungarian Fidesz appeared to do so successfully,

the operational objectives of the constituent parties thus became a more dominant factor in determining the fate of the Convention than deep-set ideological differences. This is despite the widespread perception among leading Convention figures that it was the lack of ideological cohesion that ultimately led to the Convention's demise. For the Civic Alliance and the other civic society groups, their principal objectives were formed around the delivery of policy goals, particularly de-Communisation. The Hungarian Democratic Union's main objective was to secure a place in government in order to ensure the delivery of policy goals perceived as benefitting its (communal) electoral constituency. The National Liberals and National Peasants shared operational objectives in the sense that they were both motivated by the desire to win elections at a national level in order to secure a leading place in government. However, as the certainty of defeat in the 2000 elections became clearer the parties opted for different strategies to achieve that goal – in the case of the National Peasants it tried to resurrect the Democratic Convention but the National Liberals opted to fight the elections alone (or possibly in partnership with the Alliance for Romania).

The *perception* of ideological difference was important to the leading actors in legitimising their continued attachment to the historic parties. But in reality the organisations that were part of the Convention united around a set of ideological preferences that were broadly recognisable as centre-right: anti-Communism, economic reform, democracy (albeit a preference for a return to a pre-war constitutional monarchy in preference to a presidency), and a respect for Church and nation. Tensions did exist and did contribute to splits within the formation, notably over the degree of autonomy that should be granted to the ethnic Hungarian community and over the speed and extent of de-Communisation. In the former case, though, in a broad ideological sense, the desire to return Romania to the European mainstream far outweighed any desire to pursue more radical nationalist themes. In the latter, the crisis that developed was not caused by the depth of ideological difference between Convention members but by the in-built structural weakness in the Convention which accommodated organisations with very different operational objectives.

A failure of leadership (which itself was derived from the organisational structure of the Convention which favoured the choice of non-party compromise candidates for leadership

positions) meant that the Convention itself did not develop a distinctive ideological programme that was separate from its member organisations beyond the limited framework of President Emil Constantinescu. In practice, while he remained committed to Romania's entry to Euro-Atlantic structures and was willing to expend considerable political capital in demonstrating this (most notably by his support for NATO action against Serbia), his wider vision of an ethical revolution in Romanian society was not given concrete form by the Convention in government.

7.2 Testing the propositions

The first of the propositions was that the fusion of nationalist, pro-democracy and pro-market philosophies into a broad integrative narrative is a necessary condition for the success of a centre-right party (as defined in the introduction). It is apparent that the Convention achieved the creation of an operational ideology that broadly matched this description. Key elements – particularly anti-Communism (and the Front and the Social Democrats as the perceived agents of continued Communism); a commitment to economic reform (albeit more cautious than the more radical proposals for 'Shock Therapy' that marked out some parties in other CEE states); and an internationalist outlook served as important markers that distinguished the Convention from the left and from the far right. At the same time the Convention's ideological commitments may have hampered it in electoral terms since the left was able to exploit fears over the extent of de-Communisation (and also to contrast its leaders' role in the 1989 Revolution with the Convention leadership's preference for a return of the Monarchy) and because the far right was able to monopolise nationalist narratives that were closed off to the Convention. It is also apparent that the Convention leadership lacked the will to craft a distinct ideology for the Convention, as distinct from the member parties, that would have allowed the Convention to emerge as a more cohesive organisation.

So while the findings here tend to support the view that a broad, integrative narrative around identifiably centre-right themes helps to create the conditions for success for a centre-right party it indicates no more than that – it may be a necessary condition but it does not appear to be sufficient to generate enduring success.

The second proposition was that a unified party structure would present higher barriers to exit for elite actors and would thus be more likely to succeed than an electoral alliance. The Convention was formed as an electoral alliance and remained so throughout its existence but the evidence presented here suggests that it *could* have evolved into a unified party structure if its leaders had willed it. The evidence set out in chapter five strongly suggests that the alliance structure – and particularly one that accommodated non-party formations - meant the Convention was less able to cope with exogenous pressures than it might have been had it been constituted as a single party. Elite actors retained a loyalty to the constituent parties and that, together with their continued organisational existence, meant that leaving the Convention was a relatively low-cost option when it failed to either deliver policy objectives or appeared to be incapable of winning an election. In addition, the breadth of operational objectives that were accommodated in the Convention structure made it difficult to reconcile the demands of the different member organisations. A structure that preserved the identities of the constituent organisations also meant that decision making was essentially a process of balance and compromise between them. This mitigated against leadership that would pursue unification and furthermore led to a preference for the choice of non-party candidates in leading positions – those leaders then being less motivated or able to pursue a party-building project. The elite-centred nature of the organisation also meant that there was little pressure (or reward) for local organisations to move towards more unified structures.

The third proposition was that the legacy of the Communist regime and the impact of the transition from Communism would weaken the centre-right's ability to cohere into a successful formation. Legacy explanations have featured heavily in published analysis of Romania's post-Communist development. Clearly some elements of the centre-right's evolution were shaped by legacy factors: most clearly the absence of a Communist-era domestic opposition which meant that there was no credible, ready-formed elite to take over the leadership of the opposition (and the post-Communist government). But there appears to be more significance in the violent, divisive and disputed nature of the transition. This polarised the political debate and led centre-right leaders to focus on issues that were of great importance to them but much less important to the wider electorate (and which also prevented broad coalition building).

7.3 Broader implications

Chapter one set out a range of factors that have been identified as possible determinants of party performance in Central and Eastern Europe. The general propositions set out by Kopecky, Mair, Webb and White can each, to some extent, be verified in development of the Romanian Democratic Convention. All of the parties of the ‘democratic opposition’ had weaker grassroots organisations than the National Salvation Front (subsequently the Social Democrats); the historic parties proved more resilient – at least in terms of elite loyalty – than the two potential challengers that were (elite-led) later creations (the Civic Alliance Party and the Alliance for Romania); there was a good deal of elite and voter volatility over the period on the centre right; indeed, the party landscape only began to show signs of stabilising after the period of this study once political structures and electoral outcomes had begun to provide consistent feedback to actors.

Yet these factors could potentially be applied to party competition across Central and Eastern Europe, where outcomes in individual countries differed markedly. In Poland the centre-right began the post-Communist era with what would appear to have been considerable assets in the form of Solidarity, with the latter providing a strong resistance narrative, a cadre of experienced political leaders and a grassroots organisational structure. But, at least until recently, centre-right parties there proved incapable of coalescing into two apparently stable structures but still without a single, dominant centre-right party-type formation. In Slovakia the centre right was initially marginalised by the nationalist right and the dominant division that occurred within the centre right was over links to the Church. In the Czech Republic and in Hungary a dominant formation did appear on the centre right around which centre right politicians eventually coalesced and which had strong links to the opposition elites that led the final challenge to Communist authorities in those countries.

For Romania, Kitschelt’s model predicts that the centre right would be weakened compared to demagogic appeals from the left and the far right and would be prone to splits and autocratic leadership. All of this being heavily influenced by legacy factors – particularly the nature of Nicolae Ceausescu’s dictatorship – and this is reinforced by much of the academic analysis of post-Communist politics in Romania which also tends to be built on

assumptions about the importance of legacy factors. In fact the outcomes, and the explanations for them, were rather more complex often rooted in what (in the context of discussions of lustration and de-communisation) commentators such as Welsh have described as ‘the politics of the (post-communist) present.’⁷⁴⁶ For example, while not denying the role of historical legacies in shaping post-Communist political outcomes, this study suggests, as we have already emphasised, that critical events that occur during the process of democratisation can have an enduring impact on the success or failure of centre-right formations (although commentators like Kitschelt and Grzymala Busse would argue that these choices themselves are determined by Communist regime legacies).

There was clearly an imbalance of political resources between the left and the centre-right in the early post-Communist years but the Democratic Convention overcame those weaknesses to win the elections of 1996. It could claim to have developed the kind of broad integrative narrative that Szczerbiak and Hanley identify as important in successful centre-right formations. But it broke up in office. The cause of its failure and ultimate break-up can be found in the inherent weaknesses of its organisational structure. These weaknesses prevented the Convention from acquiring strong directive leadership that could have driven the development of a more resilient organisational structure. Furthermore the organisational structure – that sought to correct a perceived imbalance in resources by embedding civil society groups within the Convention – built-in a lack of flexibility when it came to dealing with the pressures of coalition government. As a more general finding, this suggests that strategies for co-operation between parties that appear attractive in the short term may be less effective in the long term than strategies that aim at competition between parties in a similar political space which may lead to one establishing dominance. It also suggests that such an approach – the ‘survival of the fittest’ – will help an organisation to develop the adaptive skills that are essential for survival in government, particularly government in coalition.

This study also raises particularly interesting questions about the links between interest groups and political parties in a modern setting. Close relationships between external sponsor organisations and political parties are well established features of European

⁷⁴⁶ Helga Welsh, *Dealing with the Communist Past: Central and East European Experiences after 1990*, *Europe-Asia Studies*, 48:3 (May 1996), 413-428

democracies be they, for example, trades union links with left-parties or connections between the church and Christian Democratic Parties. In post-Communist Central and Eastern Europe there was initially a close relationship between the Solidarity trades union and Solidarity Electoral Action in Poland. Also in Poland there were strong links between elements of the Catholic Church and parties such as the League of Polish Families. But these relationships are the exception rather than the rule. And, as Kirchheimer and Panebianco have pointed in their catch-all/electoral-professional party models, there has been a trend in west European democracies for parties to loosen those ties that do exist over recent years. In Romania, the Democratic Convention was constructed in such a way as to bring civic society organisations – particularly the Civic Alliance – into the heart of the organisational structure. This was done to secure legitimacy for the Convention but it proved to be a major source of tension once the formation had gained office since the Civic Alliance continued to sit outside the structures that had been set up to manage relations between the coalition partners in government. The extent of integration between the civic society groups and the political parties in the Convention is unusual and suggests that such an arrangement is problematic when parties are driven by electoral concerns to broaden their appeal beyond the potentially narrower priorities of the interest groups that they ally with.

7.4 Taking the research forward

This study is time-limited and concentrates deliberately on organisational aspects of the Convention's development. There are a number of further areas of study that could pay dividends in broadening understanding of the factors shaping the development of the centre-right in the CEE region.

As mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, the evidence suggests that the events immediately following the Romanian revolution of December 1989 had a profound and enduring impact on the actions and outlook of centre-right political leaders. Chapter one explains that this thesis views these events solely in a Romanian context. There is a substantial academic literature on the role of critical junctures in shaping political developments, but this work does not engage with that literature because it would risk taking the thesis too far from its principal objective of testing the performance of the

Democratic Convention against Szczerbiak and Hanley's framework. Nevertheless, the evidence outlined here and the conclusions reached could form the basis of further study in examining the role of critical junctures.

An additional area to explore would involve developing a richer understanding of the role of voter preference in driving party development. While an extensive literature on voter preferences in post-Communist Central and Eastern Europe exists, there is very little that brings together analysis of party development with analysis of voter behaviour. This is no doubt due to a number of factors: opinion polling in the region has not developed the level of sophistication that is seen in western Europe; after half a century of Communism the electorate was subject to very different stratification from the class-based structures which classic works say most commonly underpin the party systems of western Europe; and with fewer elections there is simply less data available.

Voter attitudes have to be understood as an exogenous factor in the development of party structures but the winning of a stable constituency of voters is a key objective for a party that aims to satisfy the success criteria that have been used in this study. Evidence does suggest that for the Romanian Democratic Convention, election defeats in 1990, 1992 and 2000 can in part be attributed to a failure to comprehend and adjust to the concerns of the majority of voters. We have seen that the Convention developed an ideological framework that was recognisably of the centre-right but it did not show signs of developing an electoral strategy that was deliberately aimed at building the loyalty of particular sections of the electorate. Further analysis might demonstrate how the votes of those 'natural' centre-right constituencies moved between parties over time. This would allow analysts to explore whether the parties that endured on the political stage – notably the National Liberals and the Democrats – were able to build more stable electorates and (with relevance beyond the study of Romanian politics) to speculate on whether establishing those stable electorates helps centre-right parties to consolidate organisationally.

A further area for potential further study is to compare the choices made and contexts faced by the Convention and those for the Democrat Party as a means of testing propositions about the factors that determine the success of centre-right parties. The Democrats went on from the 2000 election defeat to change their party leader and to move into the space on the

centre-right of politics vacated by the disappearance of the Convention. They did so successfully and in a series of elections between 2004 and 2009 they established themselves as the leading party in the centre-right political territory. There are a number of organisational differences between the Democrats and the Democratic Convention, a difference in leadership structure (and in origin) and in strategic choices that make it a potentially informative examination in the comparative study of centre-right parties in the CEE region.

The Petre Roman faction of the National Salvation Front, which evolved into the Democrat Party, was initially clear that its own identity lay as a social democratic party on the centre left of the political spectrum.⁷⁴⁷ But it was also firmly part of the anti-Iliescu opposition. It appears that collaboration between the Democrat Party and the Convention was regularly discussed in the years after the 1992 election.⁷⁴⁸ In the autumn of 1994, Petre Roman gave an interview in which he dismissed any prospect of collaboration with Ion Iliescu's party and indicated that the Democrats and the Convention shared a common agenda in opposing Iliescu.⁷⁴⁹ Roman's vision was of a democratic opposition organisation that united the 'social' forces in politics: 'social democrats, social Christians and social liberals.'⁷⁵⁰

But barriers to co-operation were substantial. The fault line between the Democrats and the radical civic liberals was drawn early and was substantial.⁷⁵¹ But the Democrats were first and foremost political entrepreneurs: they were willing to trade ideological commitments in return for perceived electoral benefit (as they did in 2005 by moving from a social democratic ideology to a centre-right one); and to deliver returns to particular constituencies of supporters in order to solidify that support (Zoe Petre, for instance, hints at the trading of government contracts with favoured businesses in the areas of forestry and transportation – both ministries controlled by Democrat politicians). Petre Roman was a committed social democrat but much of the party had a flexible approach to ideology. The

⁷⁴⁷ Conventia nationala extraordinara a FSN, *Romania Libera*, 27 July 1992, page 2.

⁷⁴⁸ Victor Babiuc, executive Vice President of the Democrats, suggests that his party first proposed that the two formations work together in January 1993 and that negotiations were held intermittently in the following years. Interviu cu Victor Babiuc, *Romania Libera*, 17 July 1996, page 3.

⁷⁴⁹ Petre Roman, *Romania Incotro*, pp. 67 – 68.

⁷⁵⁰ Address to the Democrat Party's national congress, October 1994. Petre Roman, *Romania Incotro*, page 111.

⁷⁵¹ See chapter 3, for example, and Zoe Petre's report of her son's reaction to the settling of the coalition government.

Convention might have benefitted more in the long run from a closer association with the Democrats despite the likely cost of losing more radical civic allies – gaining the political and management skills that the Democrats would have brought with them into the formation had they joined.

Instead the Democrats were left outside the Convention structure and were barely tolerated as coalition partners in government. After Roman's heavy defeat in the presidential election of 2000 (see table 10 above), pressure grew for a change of leadership and Traian Basescu mounted a successful challenge for the leadership in 2001. After negotiating a successful electoral alliance with the National Liberals for the elections of 2004, Basescu surprised observers by taking the Democrats from their position as social democrats to membership of the European People's Party and a stated position on the centre right. They reinforced this transformation by merging, in 2008, with elements from the National Liberal Party to form the Democrat Liberal Party.

The potential explanations for the Democrats' success are numerous. Did they possess the kind of political resources that the Convention lacked in terms of its leadership (as many of them were from the managerial class of the former regime were they better equipped to adapt to the demands of electoral politics)? Was the apparently greater cohesion of their leadership group critical? What was the significance of their unified party structure and strong national leadership? A number of the contrasts in between the Democratic Convention and the Democrat Party suggest similarities in approach to Fidesz of Hungary and the Czech Civic Democrats and given the success of those parties in consolidating their positions it suggests that comparative study of the parties could prove informative. One such difference in strategic approach which could have particular relevance in wider studies of party development in new democracies is the apparent choice that each of these parties (the Romanian Democrats, Fidesz and the Civic Democrats) made to reject strategies based on co-operation between parties as equals but instead to seek alliances only as the clearly dominant partner and preferably to compete with, defeat and/or consume potential rivals on the centre-right. In other words, does the loss of short-term benefits from rejecting co-operative working yield greater long-term benefits thanks to the 'survival of the fittest'?

The final area suggested for additional study relates to the most striking organisational feature of the Romanian Democratic Convention but which again suggests questions that have much wider relevance in the field of comparative politics: the role of the civic society groups within the Convention. The civic society groups – and in particular the Civic Alliance – were seen as an essential glue to the Convention. They acted as a balance between the National Liberals and the National Peasants in particular to ensure that neither party completely dominated the organisational structure of the formation (although, as noted, the departure of the Campeanu-led National Liberals before the 1992 elections created a permanent imbalance between these two leading parties). But in power the fact that their ideological commitment was not tempered by their leaders gaining political office meant that they created huge strains on the organisation. A number of parties within the CEE region have close links to non-party organisations that act as sponsor organisations. Most notable is Solidarity in Poland but also Civic Forum in the Czech Republic. And established parties in Western Europe have similarly close links to sponsor organisations: those between the church and Christian Democratic parties and between Trades Unions and parties of the left for example. The Democratic Convention potentially adds a useful case-study to analysis of the relationship between sponsor organisations and political parties; how the policy demands of those sponsor organisations are assimilated by the parties and reconciled with the preferences of the electorate; and whether those sponsor organisations can be integrated into a successful party in a modern democracy.

Bibliography

- Abraham, Florin, *Romania de la comunism la capitalism*, Tritonic, Bucharest, 2006
- Agh, Attila, *The Politics of Central Europe*, Sage, London, 1998
- Aldcroft, Derek & Morewood, Steven, *Economic Change in Eastern Europe Since 1918*, Edward Elgar, Aldershot, 1995
- Andreescu, Gabriel, *Right Wing Extremism in Romania*, Ethno-cultural Diversity Resource Centre, Cluj, 2003
- Badescu, Gabriel and Sum, Paul, *Historical Legacies, Social Capital and Civil Society: Comparing Romania on a Regional Level*, *Europe-Asia Studies*, 57/1, Jan 2005
- Bale, Tim, Boston, Jonathan and Church, Stephen, *Natural because it had become just that*, *Australian Journal of Political Science*, 40/4, 2005
- Barry, Brian, *Review Article: Exit, Voice and Loyalty*, *British Journal of Political Science*, vol 4, January 1974
- Betcher, Kim, *Factions of Interest in Japan and Italy*, *Party Politics*, vol. 11, no. 3, pp. 339 - 358
- Boucek, Francoise, *The Structure and Dynamics of Intra-Party Politics in Europe, Perspectives on European Politics and Society*, vol. 3, no. 3 (2002), pp. 454 – 493
- Bozoki, Andras and Ishiyama, John, (eds), *The Communist Successor Parties of Central and Eastern Europe*, M E Sharpe, New York, 2002
- Brubaker, Rogers, *Nationalist Politics and Everyday Ethnicity in a Transylvanian Town*, Princeton University Press, 2006
- Brucan, Silviu, *The Wasted Generation*, Westview Press, New York, 1993
- Bugajski, Janusz, *Political Parties of Eastern Europe*, M E Sharpe, New York, 2002
- Carey, Henry (ed), *Romania Since 1989*, Lexington, Lanham, 2004
- Cartwright, Andrew, *The Return of the Peasant, land reform in post-Communist Romania*, Ashgate, Aldershot, 2001
- Centrul de Analize si Studii Politice (CASP), *Factori determinanti pentru rezultatul alegerilor generale 2004*, Bucharest, November 2004
- Cesereanu, Ruxandra, *Decembrie '89, Polirom*, Bucharest, 2004
- Churchill, Winston, *The World Crisis 1911 – 1918*, Penguin, London (2005 edition)
- Codrescu, Andrei, *The Hole in the Flag*, Wiliam Morrow, New York, 1991

- Constantinescu, Emil, *Time of Tearing Down, Time of Building*, Universalia, Bucharest, 2005
- Coposu, Corneliu, *Confesiuni*, Editura Anastasia, Bucharest, 1996
- Coposu, Corneliu, *In Memoriam – Corneliu Coposu*, Recording of interview with Corneliu Coposu, published by Fundatia Agnus Dei, Bucharest, Romania, 2005
- Creed, Gerald, *Domesticating Revolution*, Pennsylvania State University Press, 1998
- Crisan, Gheorghe, *Piramida Puterii*, vol II, Pro Historia, Bucharest, 2004
- Dawisha, Karen & Parrott, Bruce (eds), *Politics, Power and the Struggle for Democracy in South East Europe*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1997
- Deletant, Dennis, *The Romanian elections of May 1990*, *Representation*, volume 29, 1990
- Deletant, Dennis, *Ceausescu and the Securitate, Coercion and Dissent in Romania 1965 – 1989*, M E Sharpe, New York, 1995
- Deletant, Dennis, *Romania Under Communist Rule*, Centre for Romanian Studies, Oxford, 1999
- Deletant, Dennis and Siani-Davies, Peter, *The Romanian Elections of November 1996*, *Representation*, volume 35, numbers 2 and 3
- Democratic Convention, *Platforma – Program a Conventiei Democratice*, Bucharest, 1992
- Democratic Convention, *Contractul cu Romania*, Bucharest, November 1995
- Diaconescu, Ion, *Dupa Revolutie, Nemira*, Bucharest, 2003
- Dierickx, Guido in Hanley, David (ed), *Christian Democracy in Europe, A Comparative Perspective*, Pinter, London, 1996
- Downs, Anthony, *An Economic Model of Democracy*, Harper, New York, 1965
- Enyedi, Zsolt, *The Role of Agency in Cleavage Formation*, *European Journal of Political Research*, 2005, vol. 44, no. 5, 697-720
- Enyedi, Zsolt, *Searching for the Right Organization: Ideology and Party Structure in East-Central Europe*, *Party Politics* 2008 14: 455-477
- Fati, Sabina in *CDR – o alianta depasita*, *Sfera Politicii* nr. 79, FSC, Bucharest, 2000
- Fischer-Galati, Stephen, *Twentieth Century Romania*, Columbia University Press, 1991
- Gallagher, Tom, *Romania after Ceausescu*, Edinburgh University Press, 1995
- Gallagher, Tom, *Theft of a Nation*, Hurst & Co, London, 2005

- Gallagher, Tom, Romania: The Disputed Election of 1990, Parliamentary Affairs, volume 44, number 1, 1991
- Gillberg, Trond, Nationalism and Communism in Romania, Westview Press, Boulder, 1990
- Giurescu, Dinu, Romania's Communist takeover, Columbia University Press, New York 1994
- Glenny, Misha, Rebirth of History, Penguin, London, 1990
- Govrin, Yosef, Israeli-Romanian relations at the end of the Ceausescu Era, Routledge, London, 2002
- Grzymala-Busse, Anna, Redeeming the Communist Past, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2002
- Hanley, Sean, The New Right in the New Europe, Routledge, Abingdon, 2008
- Hanley, Sean, Szczerbiak, Aleks, Houghton, Tim, Fowler, Brigid, Sticking together: explaining comparative centre-right party success in post-Communist Central and Eastern Europe, Party Politics, vol. 14, number 4, 2008, pp. 407 – 434
- Houghton, Tim and Rybar, Marek, All Right Now? Explaining the Successes and Failures of the Slovak Centre-right, Journal of Communist Studies and Transition Politics, 20 (3), September 2004, pp. 115-132
- Henderson, Karen, Slovakia: The Escape from Invisibility, Routledge, London, 2002
- Hirschman, Albert, Exit, Voice and Loyalty, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, 1970
- Hitchens, Keith, Rumania 1866 – 1947, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1994
- Hopkin, Jonathan, Party formation and democratic transition in Spain, Macmillan, London, 1999
- Hopkin Jonathan and Paolucci, Caterina, The business firm model of party organisation, European Journal of Political Research, Vol. 35, 1999, pp. 307 - 339
- Iliescu, Ion & Tismaneanu, Vladimir, The Great Shock at the end of a short century, Enciclopedia, Bucharest, 2004
- Ion, Narcis, Gheorghe Tatarescu si Partidul National Liberal 1944 – 1948, Tritonic, Bucharest 2003
- Ionascu, Alexandra and Soare, Sorina, Cultivating Large Membership Rolls, the Romanian Case, September 2008, Free University of Brussels (unpublished conference paper)
- Katz, Richard and Mair, Peter, Changing Models of Party Organization and Party Democracy, Party Politics, 1995, vol 1, number 1, pp. 5-28, Sage, London
- Kitschelt, Herbert, The Formation of Party Systems in East Central Europe, Politics & Society, Vol. 20, no. 1, 1992

Kitschelt, Herbert, *The Formation of Party Cleavages in Post-Communist democracies*, *Party Politics*, vol. 1, no. 4 (1995)

Kitschelt, Herbert, Mansfeldova, Zdenka, Markowski, Radoslav and Toka, Gabor, *Post-Communist Party Systems, Competition, Representation, and Inter-Party Cooperation*, Cambridge University Press, 1999

Kopecky, Petr, *Developing Party Organisations in East-Central Europe*, *Party Politics* I/4, 1995, Sage, London

Kuzio, Taras, *Transition in Post-Communist States: Triple or Quadruple?*, *Politics*, vol. 21, no. 3, pp. 168 – 177

Lawson, Kay, *Political Parties Inside and Out*, *Comparative Politics*, 1990

Lawson, Kay and Merkl, Peter, *When Parties Fail*, Princeton University Press, 1988

Legters, Lyman (ed), *Eastern Europe – Transformation and Revolution 1945 – 1991*, D C Heath, Lexington, 1992

Lewis, Paul (ed), *Political Parties in post-Communist Eastern Europe*, Frank Cass, London, 2001

Lewis, Paul (ed), *Party Development and Democratic Change in Post-Communist Europe*, Frank Cass, 2001

Light, Duncan and Phinnemore, David, (eds), *Post-Communist Romania*, Palgrave, Basingstoke, 2001

Linz, Juan and Stepan, Alfred, *Problems of democratic transition and consolidation*, Johns Hopkins University Press, Baltimore, 1996

Lipset, Seymour and Rokkan, Stein, *Party Systems and Voter Alignments: Cross National Perspectives*, The Free Press, Toronto, 1967

McCauley, Martin (ed), *Communist Power in Europe, 1944 – 49*, Barnes and Noble, New York, 1977

Mair, Peter, *Party System Change*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1997

Mair, Peter and Mudde, Cas, *The Party Family and its Study*, *Annual Review of Political Science*, vol. 1, 1998, pp. 211 – 229

Marga, Andrei, *Iesirea din trecut*, Alma Mater, Cluj, 2002

Marga, Andrei, *Interviuri, speranta si ratiunii*, Fundatia Pentru Studii Europene, Cluj, 2006

Marga, Andrei, *Anii Reformei 1997 – 2000*, Fundatia Pentru Studii Europene, Cluj, 2007

Maxfield, Edward, *A New Right for a New Europe? Basescu, the Democrats and the Romanian centre-right*, SEI Working Paper number 106, University of Sussex, 2008

- Michels, Robert, *Political Parties*, Crowell-Collier, 1962 (first published 1911)
- Millard, Frances, *Elections, Parties and Representation in Post-Communist Europe*, Palgrave, Basingstoke, 2004
- Morgenstern, Scott, *Organised Factions and Disorganised Parties*, *Party Politics*, vol. 7, no. 2, pp. 235 – 256
- Muller, Wolfgang and Strom, Kaare, *Policy, Office, Votes?*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1999
- Nastase, Adrian, *Battle For The Future*, Columbia University Press, New York 2001
- National Peasant Party, *Pe Acelasi Drum*, Tritonic, Bucharest, 2000
- National Peasant Party, *The National Peasant Christian Democratic Party* (leaflet published in 2001)
- National Peasant Party, *PNTCD Serving Romania – a synthesis of the party's history*, Bucharest, 2002
- National Peasant Party, *Anul Comemorativ Maniu-Mihalache Sesiune de Comunicari*, Bucharest, 2003
- Nelson, Daniel, *Romania After Tyranny*, Westview Press, Boulder, 1992
- Nicolaescu, Sergiu, *Lupta Pentru Putere*, Decembrie 1989, Editura All, Bucharest
- Offe, Claus, *Capitalism by democratic design*, *Social Research*, vol. 71, no. 3, 2004, pp. 501 – 528
- Open Society Institute, *Monitoring the EU accession process: Corruption and Anti-corruption policy*, Budapest, 2002
- Oprescu, Dan, *UDMR in 2000*, *Sfera Politicii*, nr. 79, FSC, Bucharest, 2000
- Ostrogorski, Mosei, *Democracy and the organization of political parties*, New Brunswick, 1982 (first published 1902)
- Panebianco, Angelo, *Political Parties, Organisation and Power*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1988
- Paolucci, Caterina, *From Democrazia Cristiana to Forza Italia and the Popolo della Liberta: Partizan change in Italy*, *Modern Italy*, Vol. 13, No. 4, November 2008, pp. 465-480
- Partidul Liberal 1993, *Manifestul Liberal*, Bucharest, October 1993
- Pavel, Dan and Huiu, Iulia, *Nu Putem Reusi Decat Impreuna*, Polirom, 2003
- Pasti, Vladimir, *Noul capitalism Romanesc*, Polirom, Bucharest, 2006
- Phinnemore, David (ed), *The EU and Romania*, The Federal Trust, London, 2006

- Pop, Liliana, *Democratising capitalism? The political economy of post-communist transformations in Romania, 1989-2001*, Manchester University Press, Manchester, 2006
- Preda, Cristian and Soare, Sorina, *Regimul, Partidele si Sistemul Politic din Romania*, Nemira, Bucharest, 2008
- Pridham, Geoffrey and Lewis, Paul (eds), *Stablising Fragile Democracies*, Routledge, London, 1996
- Ratesh, Nestor, *Romania: The Entangled Revolution*, Praeger, New York, 1991
- Ratiu, Ion, *Istoria unei candidature deturnate*, Regent House, Bucharest, 2001
- Roman, Petre, *Libertatae ca Datorie*, Dacia, Cluj, 1994
- Roman, Petre, *Romania Incotro*, Scripta, Bucharest, 1995
- Roper, Steven, *From opposition to government coalition: unity and fragmentation in the Democratic Convention of Romania*, *East European Quarterly* 31/4, January 1998
- Rose, Richard, *Parties, Factions and Tendencies in Britain*, *Political Studies* (1964), vol. 12, no. 1, pp. 33 – 46
- Sartori, Giovanni, *Parties and Party Systems, A Framework for Analysis*, ECPR, London, (2005 reprint)
- Saxonberg, Steven, *The Influence of Presidential Systems: Why the Right is so Weak in Conservative Poland and so Strong in the Egalitarian Czech Republic?*, *Problems of Post-Communism*, vol. 50, no. 3, 2003
- Scurtu, Ioan, *Enciclopedia partidelor politice din Romania 1859 – 2003*, Meronia, Bucharest, 2003
- Sbarna, Gheorghe, *Partidele Politice din Romania 1918 – 1940*, Editura Sylvi, Bucharest, 2002
- Seton-Watson, Robert, *A History of the Roumanians*, Cambridge University Press 1934
- Shafir, Michael, *Romanian Politics and Society*, Frances Pinter London, 1985
- Shafir, Michael, *The Greater Romania Party and the 2000 elections in Romania*, *Romanian Journal of Society and Politics*, 1/2, November 2001
- Sharman Jason and Phillips, Robert, *An internalist perspective on party consolidation and the Bulgarian Union of Democratic Forces*, *European Journal of Political Research*, vol. 43, no. 3, May 2004,
- Siani-Davies, Peter, *The Traditional Parties and the Romanian Elections of May 1990*, *Occasional Papers in Romanian Studies*, number 2, School of Slavonic and East European Studies, 1998

Siani-Davies, Peter, *The Romanian Revolution of December 1989*, Cornell University Press, London, 2005

Social Democratic Party, *Towards Normality – A modern social democratic vision of Romania's future*, 2002

Soos, Toka and Wright, *The State of Local Democracy in Central Europe*, Local Government Initiative, 2002

Spirova, Maria, *Political Parties in Bulgaria*, *Party Politics*, Vol. 11, No. 5, 2005, pp 601 – 622

Stan, Apostol, *Revolutia romana vazuta din strada*, Curtea Veche, Bucharest, 2007

Stan, Lavinia, *From Riches to Rags: the Romanian Christian Democrat Peasant Party*, *East European Quarterly*, vol. 39 number 2 (Summer 2005)

Stan, Lavinia, *Pulpits, Ballots and Party Cards: Religion and Elections in Romania*, *Religion, State and Society*, vol. 33, no. 4, December 2005

Stan, Lavinia, *Lustration in Romania, the story of a failure*, *Studia Politica, Nemira*, vol. 6, no. 1 (2006)

Stan, Lavinia, *The Roof Over Our Heads: Property Restitution in Romania*, *Journal of Communist Studies and Transition Politics*, vol. 22, no. 2, June 2006

Stefan, Laurentiu, *Patterns of Political Elite Recruitment in Post Communist Romania*, Ziua, Bucharest, 2004

Stefan-Scalat, Laurentiu, *Fantoma lui Radu Campeanu*, *Sfera Politicii* 87-88, FSC, Bucharest, 2000

Stefanescu, Domnita, *Cinci ani din istoria Romaniei*, Masina de Scris, Bucharest, 1995

Stein, Jonathan (ed), *The Politics of National Minority Participation in Post Communist Europe*, East West Institute, New York

Stoica, Stan, *Dictionarul Partidelor Politice din Romania 1989-2003*, Meronica, Bucharest, 2003

Stoica, Stan, *Romania dupa 1989*, Meronica, Bucharest, 2007

Stoica, Valeriu, *Provocari Liberale*, Humanitas, Bucharest, 2003

Stoica, Valeriu, *Unificarea dreptei*, Humanitas, Bucharest, 2008

Strom, Muller and Bergman, *Rulers, Rules and Coalitions*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2008

Swain, Geoffrey and Nigel, *Eastern Europe Since 1945*, Macmillan, London, 1993

Szczerbiak, Aleks The Polish Centre-Right's (Last) Best Hope: The Rise and Fall of Solidarity Electoral Action, *Journal of Communist Studies and Transition Politics*, Vol. 20, No. 3, 2004, pp. 55 – 79

Szczerbiak, Aleks and Hanley, Sean (eds), *Centre-Right Parties in Post-Communist East-Central Europe*, Routledge, Abingdon, 2005

Taras, Ray, *Post-Communist Presidents*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1996

Tismaneanu, Vladimir, *Stalinism For All Seasons*, University of California Press, Berkeley, 2003

Tismaneanu, Vladimir in Dawisha and Parrot (eds), *Politics, Power and the Struggle for Democracy in South East Europe*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1997

Tismaneanu, Vladimir and Gail Kligman, Romania's first post-Communist decade, *East European Constitutional Review*, Vol. 10, no. 1

Torrey, Glenn *Romania and World War 1*, Center for Romanian Studies, Iasi, 1998

Ucen Peter and Surotchak Jan (eds), *Why we lost – explaining the rise and fall of the Center Right parties in Central Europe, 1996-2002*, International Republican Institute, Bratislava, 2005

Uniunea Fortelor de Dreapta, *Manifestul dreptei*, Bucharest, 1998

Vachudova, Milada, *Integration, Security and Immigration: The European Agendas of Eastern Europe's Right Wing Parties*, Council of European Studies Paper, Chicago, March 2002

Vachudova, Milada, *Right-Wing Parties and Political Outcomes in East Central Europe*, *Party Politics*, vol. 14, no. 4, 2008, pp. 387 - 405

van Hecke Steven and Gerard Emmanuel (eds), *Christian Democratic Parties in Europe since the end of the Cold War*, Leuven University Press, 2004

Verdery, Katherine, *National Ideology Under Socialism*, University of California Press, Berkeley, 1991

Verdery, Katherine, "Faith, Hope, and Caritas in the Land of the Pyramids: Romania, 1990 to 1994", *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, Vol. 37, No. 4. (Oct., 1995)

Vosgian, Varujan, *Mesajul Dreptei Romanesti*, Nemira, Bucharest, 2001

Vrabiescu-Kleckner, Simona Maria, *O Marturie Provocata*, Themis, Bucharest, 2004

Webb Paul and White, Stephen, *Political parties in new democracies*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2009

Welsh, Helga, Dealing with the Communist Past: Central and East European Experiences after 1990, *Europe-Asia Studies*, 48:3 (May 1996), 413-428

Wilson, Frank *The European Centre-Right at the end of the Twentieth Century*, MacMillan, 1998

Zariski, Raphael, Party Factions and Comparative Politics, *Midwest Journal of Political Science* (1960), vol. 4, no. 1, pp. 27 – 51

Websites cited

Association of Former Political Prisoners	www.afdpr.ro
Celendo	www.celendo.ro
Central European Review	www.ce-review.org
Civic Alliance	www.aliantacivica.ro
Coposu Institute	www.corneliu-coposu.ro
Essex University election archive	www2.essex.ac.uk/elect/
Evenimentul Zilei	www.evz.ro
Ion Ratiu Centre	www.ratiudemocracycenter.org
Gallup Romania	www.gallup.ro
Kappa	www.kappa.ro
News4Romania	http://news4romania.com
Procesul Comunismului	www.procesulcomunismului.com
Revista 22	www.revista22.ro
Union of Right Forces	www.ugd.ro
Valerian Stan	www.valerianstan.ro
Ziarul de Iasi	www.ziaruldeiasi.ro

Appendix One

Romania's principle post-Communist political formations

The following gives brief background information on the main parties and formations that operated in Romania in the first decade and a half after the fall of Communism. It does not include those parties that formed the centre-right up to 2000 and whose history and structure is described in detail in the body of the thesis.

The Agrarian Democrats (Partidul Democrat Agrar din Romania - PDAR)

The party originated as an agrarian party, prioritising the development of rural Romania. The party was offered ministerial posts in the first Front government. It formed a short-lived electoral alliance with the National Unity Party before opting to fight the 1996 election as part of a centrist alliance with the Humanist Party and an ecologist formation. After it failed to enter parliament in 1996, the party returned to links with the National Unity Party, before disappearing to the electoral margins.

Alliance for Romania (Alianta pentru Romania - ApR)

The party was established by reformist members of the Social Democrats in a reaction to electoral defeat in 1996. Teodor Melescanu, who served as foreign minister in the first post-Communist government, was the party's presidential candidate in 2000. Following a disappointing performance in that election, the Alliance travelled rapidly on the road to social liberalism, eventually merging with the National Liberals.

The Democrat Party (Partidul Democrat - PD)

The genesis of the Democratic Party was the split between Prime Minister Petre Roman and President Ion Iliescu. Petre Roman, as Romania's first post-Communist prime minister placed himself at the head of a group of social democratic modernisers keen to initiate rapid reform and opposed to conservative 'perestroikistii' who wished for a more evolutionary approach.⁷⁵² Tensions between Roman and Iliescu led eventually to the former's sacking

⁷⁵² See Petre Roman, *Libertatea ca Datorie*.

and the group around Roman split from Iliescu in 1992 although they retained the National Salvation Front name, subsequently transforming into the Democratic Party.

At its foundation the Democratic Party declared that it was a social democratic party on the centre left and that its fundamental principles were republican, democratic, in favour of social justice, equality of opportunity, liberty and social solidarity.⁷⁵³ The party affiliated to the Socialist International and to the Party of European Socialists.

In the period 1993-95, the Democrats progressed through a series of alliances and mergers with smaller social democratic parties, emerging ultimately as part of the *Union of Social Democrats (Uniunea Social Democrata - USD)* with the ‘historic’ Social Democratic Party – winning 13% of the vote in the 1996 General Election and becoming the third largest parliamentary group. Dismantling all remnants of the former communist regime had continued to be a central theme of Petre Roman’s political rhetoric and the Union of Social Democrats entered the government as coalition partner to the Convention under an accord which aspired to a ‘rapid transition to a market economy, conditions essential for the integration of Romania into Euro-Atlantic structures’.⁷⁵⁴

In both 2000 and 2001, the Democrats’ national council reaffirmed its social democratic credentials (the latter motion being proposed by new party leader, Basescu). In 2002, the party’s annual conference adopted a resolution which forbade any form of pre- or post-election collaboration with the Social Democrats. By 2000 just 5% of Democrat members of parliament claimed to have held leadership positions in the PCR – compared to a quarter of Social Democrat and almost a third of Greater Romania Party parliamentarians.⁷⁵⁵ In 2003, the Democrats concluded an electoral pact with the National Liberals – the Truth and Justice Alliance (Alianta DA). By 2005, the party had travelled sufficiently far from its social democratic origins to apply for membership of the centre-right European People’s Party and to re-cast itself as a ‘Popular Party’.⁷⁵⁶

⁷⁵³ See Scurtu, *Enciclopedia*.

⁷⁵⁴ Scurtu, *Enciclopedia*, page 194.

⁷⁵⁵ Survey data from Laurentiu Stefan, page 123.

⁷⁵⁶ Reported in *Cadran Politic* magazine, July/August 2005.

Ecologists

Numerous ecologist formations have made an appearance on the political stage, including *the Ecologist Movement (MER)*, *the Ecologist Party (PER)*, *the Ecologist Federation (FER)* and the *Green Alternative (AVE)*. Only one has gained parliamentary representation in more than one election contested alone and only one has done so as part of a wider electoral alliance (the Ecologist Party won a handful of seats in 1992 and 1996 as part of the CDR).

Ethnic Minority Formations

The allocation of guaranteed parliamentary seats to ethnic minorities has led to competition between a plethora of tiny parties outside of the Hungarian ethnic group. The deputies elected as minority representatives have tended to offer consistent support to the government of the day and have played an insignificant role in national politics.

The Greater Romania Party (Partidul Romania Mare - PRM)

Many western observers watched with horrified fascination as the Greater Romania Party reached the apex of its electoral success in the General Election of 2000. Eighty-four Greater Romania Party deputies were elected – making it easily the second largest Parliamentary grouping, and the party leader, Corneliu Vadim Tudor, made the run-off ballot in the Presidential election.⁷⁵⁷

Tudor is a hugely significant part of the Greater Romania Party story. Famously the ‘court poet’ to the Ceausescu regime, he launched a stridently nationalist newspaper *Romania Mare* in the summer of 1990 and a year later established the Greater Romania Party. The party entered parliament in 1992 with the election of 16 deputies and formed another leg of the Red Quadrilateral by providing parliamentary support to the government. It won 5.5% of the vote in 1996.

None of this served to signal the spectacular success achieved in the elections of 2000. However, after securing such a significant presence in Parliament and a third of the vote in

⁷⁵⁷ Gallagher has gone as far as to call the PRM the most successful ‘anti-system’ party in Eastern Europe, although this appears to overlook both the fleeting nature of the electoral breakthrough in 2000 and the success of anti-democratic nationalist parties in Slovakia and the former Yugoslav states. Gallagher, *Greater Romania Party*.

the second round of the Presidential election, the party was unable to sustain its momentum. It won just 8.9% of the vote in local elections in 2004 and failed to win the mayoralty of any major city.⁷⁵⁸ Later in the year it fell back to 13% in the elections for the Chamber of Deputies and Tudor finished third in the presidential poll.

There is some dispute around how exactly to classify the Greater Romania Party within the constraints of a traditional left-right spectrum. Gallagher, for example, has raised the question of how appropriate a far right designation is for the party. The party has had a turbulent relationship with the post-Communist left but it is clear that they have sought mutually beneficial accommodation at times. Not only have they served together in government but have also explored other forms of political co-operation. There are also indications that the Greater Romania Party draws support more heavily from voters who define themselves as left wing than those who define themselves as on the right.⁷⁵⁹

But there are four distinct factors separating the party from the left and indicating that it should be categorised as on the nationalist right. The party's particularist standpoint means that it has no over-arching internationalist theme to Tudor's discourse and the party leader is happy to identify with the national chauvinism of the Ceausescu regime. Its principal historical reference point is the pre-war proto-fascist Iron Guard movement and it was formed as a new and independent nationalist movement after 1989 – numerous Communist apparatchiks joined the party but it did not inherit the political or physical assets of the former ruling party. Its interpretation of the 'December Events' of 1989 differs from the post-Communist left, seeing the overthrow of Ceausescu as being a foreign-co-ordinated coup. Its economic policy also conflicts with leftist visions of economic and social progress - although it does promote extensive state intervention in the economy it sentimentalises the rural peasantry over urban industrialism and attaches great importance to 'blood and soil' rhetoric.

⁷⁵⁸ Centrul de Analize si Studii Politice (CASP), *Factori determinanti pentru rezultatul alegerilor generale 2004*, Bucharest November 2004.

⁷⁵⁹ Mungiu Pippidi, page 110. Despite this evidence, polling indicates that in the presidential election of 2004, 85% of voters who backed Tudor in the first round of voting switched to the centrist Basescu in preference to Social Democrat candidate Adrian Nastase (www.IMAS.ro).

Humanist Party (Partidul Umanist Roman - PUR)

It was formed in 1991 as a social-liberal party by media tycoon Dan Voiculescu. Its low level of popular support has been offset by the utility of Voiculescu's media holdings making it an attractive coalition partner. The party served as a government coalition partner with the Social Democrats from 2000. It ran on a joint electoral ticket with the Social Democrats in 2004 and commenced coalition negotiations with the party before Traian Basescu won the presidential run-off at which point it switched to backing a coalition led by the Truth and Justice Alliance. In 2005, the party re-branded completely as the *Conservative Party (Partidul Conservator - PC)*, claiming the heritage of the historic Conservative Party, adopting a distinctively nationalist/conservative programme.

The National Salvation Front (Frontul Salvarii Nationale - FSN)

Initially a broad alliance of interests and individuals that formed the first post-Ceausescu government, the FSN's decision to constitute itself as a party and contest the elections of May 1990 is a defining moment in Romania's post-Communist politics. Following the dismissal of Petre Roman as Prime Minister, the Front split. The Roman faction retained the name National Salvation Front, while the Iliescu-led formation evolved via the *Democratic National Salvation Front (Frontul Democratice de Salvarii Nationale – FDSN)* into the Social Democratic Party (see below).

Although this unusual genesis suggests a blurring of political boundaries, it is widely accepted that the National Salvation Front under the leadership of Ion Iliescu falls comfortably within the category of 'Communist Successor' parties. Lavinia Stan provides evidence of wholesale transfer of Communist Party political assets to the Front at local level.⁷⁶⁰ Lewis has no difficulty in categorising the Front as a communist successor party while acknowledging its role as providing the leadership of the revolution.⁷⁶¹

⁷⁶⁰ Lavinia Stan, *Leaders & Laggards*, page 43.

⁷⁶¹ Lewis, *Political Parties*, page 28

The National Unity Party (Partidul Unitatii Nationale a Romanilor - PUNR)

The nationalist stance of Ceausescu regime, together with concerns about the political role of the Hungarian minority and the future of Soviet Moldova created a fertile political space for nationalist parties in post-Communist Romanian politics.

Of the two principal formations, the National Unity Party had the least ambiguously nationalist genesis. It was formed in Transylvania soon after the events of December 1989 in response to perceived threats to national integrity from a politically united and rapidly organising Hungarian minority. It was fuelled by popular mythology around foreign interference in the downfall of the Ceausescu regime and was founded effectively as the 'political wing' of the nationalist cultural organisation Romanian Hearth (Vatra Romaneasca).

The party won a little over 2% of the vote and 9 seats in Parliament in the elections of 1990.⁷⁶² In 1992 it trebled its vote share and elected 30 deputies – entering a left-dominated coalition government in August 1994 which became known as the 'Red Quadrilateral'.⁷⁶³ By 1996, though, the National Unity Party had been eclipsed by the Greater Romania Party giving rise to splits within the party over strategy. The party's charismatic leader Gheorghe Funar was ousted and the new leadership attempted to reposition it with a more centrist appeal.⁷⁶⁴ Funar and his supporters responded by leaving the party for the Greater Romania Party. The National Unity Party did not survive as a viable electoral entity after the split and dropped below the electoral threshold in 2000.

The Social Democratic Party (Partidul Social Democrat - PSD)

Whatever the ambiguities over the origins of the National Salvation Front, it moved to position itself as a mainstream party on the democratic left and there is a direct mechanical and ideological progression from the Front, through the Party of Social Democracy in

⁷⁶² Essex University

(www2.essex.ac.uk/elect/database/indexElections.asp?country=Romania&election=ro90cd)

⁷⁶³ Janusz Bugajski, *Political parties of Eastern Europe – A Guide to Politics in the Post Communist Era*, Center for Strategic & International Studies, New York, 2002.

⁷⁶⁴ Gheorghe Funar is an unabashed nationalist and was mayor of Cluj-Napoca until defeated in 2004. His mayoralty was marked by acts designed to provoke and humiliate the Hungarian minority in this ethnically divided city such as a ban on bi-lingual shop signs and restrictions on Hungarian cultural associations.

Romania (PDSR) to the PSD.⁷⁶⁵ After Iliescu's split with Petre Roman, those loyal to Iliescu (most of the Front hierarchy) formed the Democratic National Salvation Front to support Iliescu's re-election campaign in 1992. The party was re-named the PDSR in 1993 and then later as the Social Democratic Party – PSD.

The Social Democrats' regular use of nationalist rhetoric and choice of coalition partners is a complicating factor when it comes to positioning the party. The party governed in co-operation with the left wing Socialist Workers and with two nationalist parties after 1992. A formal political pact was concluded with the stridently nationalist Greater Romania Party at the beginning of 1995 but the Social Democrats withdrew from it in October of that year before the alliance could be tested in an election. The superficial reason for the collapse of the pact was a bitter row over lustration, but Deletant points out that the pact had met a chilly reaction from Western governments and the Iliescu government was concerned with the impact on its attempts to move closer to the EU and to the United States.⁷⁶⁶

The Social Democrats' current incarnation was created from a merger with the smaller (historic) Social Democratic Party. The principal attraction of the merger was the international affiliations of the smaller partner. The union led the enlarged Social Democrats into membership of the mainstream associations of the European left - the Socialist International and the Party of European Socialists. Throughout the period, the Social Democrats were one of the most successful political formations in post-Communist Central and Eastern Europe with a large membership, strong local government base and having topped the poll (in one guise or another) in the first round of every presidential election from 1990 to 2004. Socialist Workers Party (Partidul Socialist al Muncii - PSM)

The Socialist Workers Party operated as representatives of unreformed communism and was initially led by Ilie Verdet (Prime Minister of Romania from 1979 – 1982). It has not had representation in the national parliament since 1996 but it maintained a presence in local government. The party split in 2003 with one faction taking the name Socialist Alliance Party.

⁷⁶⁵ In March 1991, the Front's National Convention adopted a motion entitled 'A future for Romania' which reaffirmed the Front's adherence to social democratic doctrine. Scurtu, page 73.

⁷⁶⁶ Dennis Deletant in *Duncan Light and David Phinnemore (eds), Post-Communist Romania, Palgrave, Basingstoke, 2001*, page 49

The Social Democratic Party (Partidul Social Democrat - PSD)

Whatever the ambiguities over the origins of the National Salvation Front, it moved to position itself as a mainstream party on the democratic left and there is a direct mechanical and ideological progression from the Front, through the Party of Social Democracy in Romania (PDSR) to the PSD.⁷⁶⁷ After Iliescu's split with Petre Roman, those loyal to Iliescu (most of the Front hierarchy) formed the Democratic National Salvation Front to support Iliescu's re-election campaign in 1992. The party was re-named the PDSR in 1993 and then later as the Social Democratic Party – PSD.

The Social Democrats' current incarnation was created from a merger with the smaller (historic) Social Democratic Party. The principal attraction of the merger was the international affiliations of the smaller partner. The union led the enlarged Social Democrats into membership of the mainstream associations of the European left - the Socialist International and the Party of European Socialists. Throughout the period, the Social Democrats were one of the most successful political formations in post-Communist Central and Eastern Europe with a large membership, strong local government base and having topped the poll (in one guise or another) in the first round of every presidential election from 1990 to 2004.

Other pragmatic-centrist parties

Although formed as a social democratic vehicle, the Alliance for Romania (Alianta pentru Romania - ApR) fits most comfortably in the centre-populist category. The party was established by reformist members of the Social Democrats in a reaction to electoral defeat in 1996. Teodor Melescanu, who served as foreign minister in the first post-Communist government, was the party's presidential candidate in 2000. Following a disappointing performance in that election, the Alliance travelled rapidly on the road to social liberalism, eventually merging with the National Liberals.

The Humanist Party (Partidul Umanist Roman - PUR) is probably best placed in the same category of centre-populist parties. It was formed in 1991 as a social-liberal party by media

⁷⁶⁷ In March 1991, the Front's National Convention adopted a motion entitled 'A future for Romania' which reaffirmed the Front's adherence to social democratic doctrine. Scurtu, page 73.

tycoon Dan Voiculescu. Its low level of popular support has been offset by the utility of Voiculescu's media holdings making it an attractive coalition partner. The party served as a government coalition partner with the Social Democrats from 2000. It ran on a joint electoral ticket with the Social Democrats in 2004 and commenced coalition negotiations with the party before Traian Basescu won the presidential run-off at which point it switched to backing a coalition led by the Truth and Justice Alliance. In 2005, the party re-branded completely as the *Conservative Party (Partidul Conservator - PC)*, claiming the heritage of the historic Conservative Party, adopting a distinctively nationalist/conservative programme.

The Greater Romania Party (Partidul Romania Mare - PRM)

Many western observers watched with horrified fascination as the Greater Romania Party reached the apex of its electoral success in the General Election of 2000. Eighty-four Greater Romania Party deputies were elected – making it easily the second largest Parliamentary grouping, and the party leader, Corneliu Vadim Tudor, made the run-off ballot in the Presidential election.⁷⁶⁸

Tudor is a hugely significant part of the Greater Romania Party story. Famously the 'court poet' to the Ceausescu regime, he launched a stridently nationalist newspaper *Romania Mare* in the summer of 1990 and a year later established the Greater Romania Party. The party entered parliament in 1992 with the election of 16 deputies and formed another leg of the Red Quadrilateral by providing parliamentary support to the government. It won 5.5% of the vote in 1996.

None of this served to signal the spectacular success achieved in the elections of 2000. However, after securing such a significant presence in Parliament and a third of the vote in the second round of the Presidential election, the party was unable to sustain its momentum. It won just 8.9% of the vote in local elections in 2004 and failed to win the

⁷⁶⁸ Gallagher has gone as far as to call the PRM the most successful 'anti-system' party in Eastern Europe, although this appears to overlook both the fleeting nature of the electoral breakthrough in 2000 and the success of anti-democratic nationalist parties in Slovakia and the former Yugoslav states. Gallagher, *Greater Romania Party*.

mayorality of any major city.⁷⁶⁹ Later in the year it fell back to 13% in the elections for the Chamber of Deputies and Tudor finished third in the presidential poll.

There is some dispute around how exactly to classify the Greater Romania Party within the constraints of a traditional left-right spectrum. Gallagher, for example, has raised the question of how appropriate a far right designation is for the party. The party has had a turbulent relationship with the post-Communist left but it is clear that they have sought mutually beneficial accommodation at times. Not only have they served together in government but have also explored other forms of political co-operation. There are also indications that the Greater Romania Party draws support more heavily from voters who define themselves as left wing than those who define themselves as on the right.⁷⁷⁰

But there are four distinct factors separating the party from the left and indicating that it should be categorised as on the nationalist right. The party's particularist standpoint means that it has no over-arching internationalist theme to Tudor's discourse and the party leader is happy to identify with the national chauvinism of the Ceausescu regime. Its principal historical reference point is the pre-war proto-fascist Iron Guard movement and it was formed as a new and independent nationalist movement after 1989 – numerous Communist apparatchiks joined the party but it did not inherit the political or physical assets of the former ruling party. Its interpretation of the 'December Events' of 1989 differs from the post-Communist left, seeing the overthrow of Ceausescu as being a foreign-co-ordinated coup. Its economic policy also conflicts with leftist visions of economic and social progress - although it does promote extensive state intervention in the economy it sentimentalises the rural peasantry over urban industrialism and attaches great importance to 'blood and soil' rhetoric.

⁷⁶⁹ Centrul de Analize si Studii Politice (CASP), *Factori determinanti pentru rezultatul alegerilor generale 2004*, Bucharest November 2004.

⁷⁷⁰ Mungiu Pippidi, page 110. Despite this evidence, polling indicates that in the presidential election of 2004, 85% of voters who backed Tudor in the first round of voting switched to the centrist Basescu in preference to Social Democrat candidate Adrian Nastase (www.IMAS.ro).

Appendix two

Post-Communist Romania – Constitutional framework⁷⁷¹

Romania's constitutional and legal system draws heavily on the French model. It operates a bi-cameral parliament in a semi-presidential framework. Parliament and President have until now been chosen in coterminous elections, although this is set to change with the presidential term recently extended to five years while the parliamentary term remains at four.

The first post-Communist parliament from 1990-1992 effectively operated as a constituent assembly in drawing up a new constitution. Despite the obvious potential for division, given the country's heavily contested exit from Communism and the presence of a significant ethnic minority population, there has been relatively little dispute over the constitutional settlement. A referendum was held in December 1991 which backed the proposed constitution by a very large margin. Since that time there have been relatively few changes to the provisions affecting the form of government institutions and the electoral system, although the threshold for parliamentary representation was raised in time for the 2000 election.

The lower house of parliament, the Chamber of Deputies, is elected from closed party lists with county-based constituencies. A national vote threshold of 5% for parties and 8% for electoral alliances operates. A number of seats are reserved for parties representing ethnic minorities and independent candidates are entitled to stand if they can gather the support of 5% of their chosen constituency's electorate. Seats in each constituency are allocated in proportion to the votes polled in the county, surplus votes and unallocated seats are then pooled nationally and re-allocated according to each party's national vote share. The same system of seat allocation is used for the Senate, although with fewer seats.⁷⁷² A Central

⁷⁷¹ Information taken from Abraham and from Preda and Soare.

⁷⁷² Law 373 of 24 September 2004 for the election of the Chamber of Deputies and the Senate, available at www.cdep.ro/pls/legis/legis_pck.http_act_text?id=58521. The previous election law of 1992 stipulated a threshold for seats of 3% nationwide both for parties and alliances.

Election Bureau is constituted for each election and is responsible for over-seeing the administration of elections and publishing results.

Table 20: Allocation of deputies and senators by constituency, 2004

Constituency	No. of deputies	No. of senators	Constituency	No. of deputies	No. of senators
Alba	6	2	Hunedoara	7	3
Arad	7	3	Ialomita	4	2
Arges	9	4	Iasi	12	5
Bacau	10	5	Ilfov	4	2
Bihor	9	4	Maramures	7	3
Bistrita-Nasaud	5	2	Mehedinti	4	2
Botosani	7	3	Mures	8	4
Brasov	9	4	Neamt	8	4
Braila	5	2	Olt	7	3
Buzau	7	3	Prahova	12	5
Caras-Severin	5	2	Satu Mare	5	2
Calarasi	5	2	Salaj	4	2
Cluj	10	4	Sibiu	6	3
Constanta	10	4	Suceava	10	4
Covasna	4	2	Teleorman	6	3
Dambovita	8	3	Timis	9	4
Dolj	10	5	Tulcea	4	2
Galati	9	4	Vaslui	7	3
Giurgiu	4	2	Valcea	6	3
Gorj	6	2	Vrancea	6	2
Harghita	5	2	Bucuresti	28	12

*One deputy allocated for every 70,000 residents, one senator for every 160,000

Mayors and councils for each of almost 3,000 communities are also elected on four year cycles. An upper tier of local government is based on 41 counties (judet). Bucharest elects a city mayor and a general council plus six district mayors and councils. Also following the French system, each county has a prefect nominated by central government responsible for overseeing the legality of local authority decision making and providing a link with the centre.⁷⁷³

⁷⁷³ See Lavinia Stan, *Leaders and Laggards*.

Appendix three

Interviewees

Gabriel Andreescu, briefly a member of the governing council of the National Salvation Front, then a notable human rights activist, in particular leading the Group for Social Dialogue.

Petru Biturca, local party office holder with the National Peasant Party, Mures County.

Lucia Briscan, local party office holder with the National Peasant Party, Mures County.

Daniel Daianu, Finance Minister 1997-8 and then National Liberal Party MEP.

Iulia Huiu, academic author and National Liberal European Parliament candidate.

Andrei Marga, Education Minister, 1997 – 2000 and leader of the National Peasant Party, 2000 – 2001.

Dan Motreanu, General Secretary of the National Liberal Party.

Liviu Muresan, Executive President of Eurisc Foundation, Member of Parliament 1990 – 1992 and defence adviser to the government 1996 – 2000.

Zoe Petre, senior advisor to President Emil Constantinescu.

Virgil Petrescu, Education Minister, 1996 – 97.

Alice Ratyis, campaigns adviser to Democratic Convention, 2000.

Valerian Stan, human rights activist, national secretary of the Civic Alliance and anti-corruption minister, 1996-1998.

Csaba Sogor, Member of the European Parliament (Hungarian Democratic Union)

Theodor Stolojan, Prime Minister, 1991 – 1992. National Liberal candidate for the presidency, 2000.

Csaba Takacs, Executive President, Hungarian Democratic Union.

Horia Terpe, Director of Centre for Analysis and Development of Institutions, adviser to Valeriu Stoica.

Varujan Vosganian, leader of the Union of Right Forces and (National Liberal) Finance Minister, 2004 – 8.

Renate Weber, human rights activist, member of the Civic Alliance and National Liberal MEP.

Rodica Zaharia, civil society activist.

The thesis was also discussed with the following academics:

Florin Abraham (Ovidiu Sincai Institute)

Ionut Ciobanu (University of Bucharest)

Liliana Pop (London Metropolitan Univesity)

Laurentiu Stefan (American Embassy, Bucharest)